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The University of California
Source of Community Leaders Oral History Series

Harold Kay, M.D.

A BERKELEY BOY'S SERVICE TO THE
MEDICAL COMMUNITY OF ALAMEDA COUNTY, 1935-1994

With an Introduction by
Frances Simon Kay

Interviews Conducted by
Germaine LaBerge
1994

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Dr. Harold Kay, 1976.

Cataloging information

KAY, Harold, M.D. (b. 1909)

Physician

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Childhood in Berkeley, CA and Berkeley fire, 1923; B.A. in international relations, UC Berkeley, 1931; medical studies: Creighton University, 1931-1933, UCSF, 1933-1935, University of Edinburgh, 1938-1939; reflections on Judaism and Yehudi Menuhin; navy doctor and quarantine officer, American Samoa, 1941-1944; urology practice in East Bay hospitals; local, state and national medical association leadership roles; work with Alameda County Blood Bank, Blue Cross of California, Alameda County Mental Health Commission, emergency medical services for Alameda and Contra Costa counties; testifying before congressional committee, 1974, on health insurance.

Introduction by Francis Simon Kay.

Interviewed 1994 by Germaine LaBerge for University of California Source of Community Leaders Oral History Series. The Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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PREFACE

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of our graduation from the University of California at Berkeley, the Class of 1931 made the decision to present its alma mater with an endowment for an oral history series to be titled "The University of California, Source of Community Leaders." The Class of 1931 Oral History Endowment provides a permanent source of funding for an ongoing series of interviews by the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library.

The commitment of the endowment is to carry out interviews with persons related to the University who have made outstanding contributions to the community, by which is meant the state or the nation, or to a particular field of endeavor. The memoirists, selected by a committee set up by the class, are to come from Cal alumni, faculty, and administrators. The men and women chosen will comprise an historic honor list in the rolls of the University.

To have the ability to make a major educational endowment is a privilege enjoyed by only a few individuals. Where a group joins together in a spirit of gratitude and admiration for their alma mater, dedicating their gift to one cause, they can affect the history of that institution greatly.

The oral histories illustrate the strength and skills the University of California has given to its sons and daughters, and the diversity of ways that they have passed those gifts on to the wider community. We envision a lengthening list of University-inspired community leaders whose accounts, preserved in this University of California, Source of Community Leaders Series, will serve to guide students and scholars in the decades to come.

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INTRODUCTION--by Frances Simon Kay

It is an honor and a privilege for me to write a few words by way of introducing my husband for 56 years, Harold Kay.

I first met him in Omaha, Nebraska in 1929. He was from Berkeley and visiting relatives who were friends of my family. For the short time we were together, he told me of the great University he attended and how much he loved being a student there. That love has never waned, and his interest, although not active now, has always been one of devotion, loyalty and gratitude for his education, training, basic values, and the meaning of relationships.

His many accomplishments, his desire to do as much as he could to help others, his active involvement in so many organizations in his profession, community, religion all attest to his great love of people.

We are very much a California family. I later moved to California and was a graduate of UCLA. Our two sons are graduates--one of California in Los Angeles, and one of Berkeley.

Along with his many activities and his medical practice, he still had the time to be a devoted husband and wonderful father and we are all so very proud that the University has seen fit to honor him in this way.

Frances S. Kay

April 11, 1994
Piedmont, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY--by Germaine LaBerge

In 1981, Dr. Harold Kay became chairman of the Class of 1931 Gift Committee as the class considered possibilities for their fiftieth anniversary gift to their Alma Mater. They chose an endowment for an oral history series, focusing on alumni who have contributed in special ways to their communities. Little did Harold Kay know that the class would want, ten years later, to document his life. In fact, it took a little over two years to convince him to say yes to this project. When I first met Dr. Kay on the eleventh of January, 1994, to discuss the oral history process and the important issues of his life, his departing comment was, "I don't have very much to say."

Luckily for me and for future researchers, we forged ahead. Dr. Kay, a specialist in urology, has made lasting contributions to the medical community and community at large: as president of the Alameda County Medical Association, he initiated the polio inoculation drive in the sixties (sugar cubes); he opened the membership door to Kaiser doctors who had previously been excluded (1963); he established the first residency program in urology at Highland Hospital in Oakland. He spoke about these issues and others in the four recorded sessions on January 20 and 27, February 3 and 17, 1994. We always met in the morning, either in his family room or the "back bedroom," whose walls display his college and medical school degrees, his memberships in various medical associations and community organizations. My only sadness for readers of this volume is that one cannot see the twinkle in his eye nor hear the witty expression of his voice. Dr. Kay's sense of humor is unmatched.

His deep love of people is a strong trademark -- whether it be a patient, a fellow serviceman in World War II, a medical colleague, his family. From an early age, he observed his mother collecting clothing and food for people in need (including young Yehudi Menuhin and his family); he watched his father organize the merchants of Berkeley to do the same (including saving Alta Bates Hospital from bankruptcy in the early days). Harold Kay has gone on to become a vital part of his community also--serving on the Piedmont Emergency Preparedness Committee and the Planning Commission, participating actively at Temple Sinai, Rotary, Masonic Lodge, and Shrine. He well deserves to be the latest addition to "The University of California, Source of Community Leaders" oral history series. Many thanks to the Class of 1931 for making this interview possible.

Born in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1909, Harold Kay's family moved to Berkeley when he was three years old. He attended all Berkeley schools and witnessed the Berkeley Fire of 1923. In his oral history, Dr. Kay describes Berkeley in the early days and his family's experience of warding off the fire and aiding the victims. Always headed toward the

University of California, he followed his older brother there in 1927, taking part in many campus activities: he managed the advertising department for the Daily Cal freshman year, participated in the Rally and Reception Committees, witnessed the first theft of the Axe by Stanford students wearing Cal rally caps.

After receiving his B.A. in international relations, he entered the medical school at Creighton University, Omaha. Two years later, he transferred to UCSF, receiving his M.D. in 1936. Dr. Kay describes the two different approaches to medical education and his reaction to both. He took some postgraduate training in anatomy at the University of Edinburgh (Scotland) where he and his new bride, Frances Simon, witnessed the beginning of the war in Europe in 1938.

Back to the states in 1939, Dr. Kay re-established his practice in urology with an established physician, Dr. Albert Meads. In 1941, he entered active duty as a naval officer, serving on Mare Island, San Francisco, and American Samoa. In this memoir, he recounts his experiences as the health and quarantine officer in Pago Pago, building a hospital for the native population with surplus marine supplies, treating elephantiasis and yaws. "There were 14,000 natives there, I guess we examined 13,000, and did a lot of studies on it. They were all sent to Washington, and of course, nobody got credit for it, except the navy. [laughter]" Dr. Kay remained in the naval reserves for twenty-eight years.

He became a solo practitioner after the war and joined the staff of several Bay Area hospitals--Highland, Alta Bates, Peralta, Herrick, Cowell, to name a few. In addition he was consulting urologist at the U.S. Veterans Hospital in Livermore, the U.S. Naval Hospital-Oak Knoll (helping to keep it open), and the U.S. Air Force. He taught nursing students at Providence Hospital and medical students at UCSF. In the midst of his work, he encountered some prejudice because of his Jewish faith. It prompted him, without bitterness, to take on leadership positions on hospital staffs and in local, state and national medical associations. He speaks about all this in his oral history, discussing issues such as national health care, including Medicare, and testifying before the House Ways and Means Committee on that subject in 1974 .

Dr. Kay's outside activities included membership on the Alameda County Institutions Commission and Alameda County Mental Health Commission. With a federal grant, he helped establish guidelines for Emergency Medical Services for both Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. His energy was endless. He served as president of the following: Alameda-Contra Costa County Medical Association, Northern California Urological Association, and the Western Section of the American Urological Association. After retiring from active practice in 1976, he

took a "job" with the Alameda County Blood Bank and in his memoir speaks about blood testing and the AIDS epidemic.

Frances Simon Kay is an important part of his life. Readers will enjoy the story of their meeting and can read between the lines to know that she has been his mainstay through many happy years of marriage. Mrs. Kay always met the interviewer at the door and made sure conditions were just right for our tape-recorded sessions. In addition, Mrs. Kay has written a fine tribute to her husband as introduction to this volume, for which we thank her. She also helped gather pictures and newspaper and journal articles for background material.

The tape recorded sessions were transcribed by Shannon Page at the Regional Oral History Office. Dr. Kay never met his transcriber but spoke to her personally on tape, an example of his interest in others. The transcript was lightly edited by the interviewer and Dr. Kay, indexed by Cici Nickerson at the office.

As his life has enriched the lives of many others since 1909, so has it enriched the life of the interviewer. Dr. Kay has not enjoyed good health in the past couple of years, needing regular blood transfusions and restricting his activity somewhat. Nonetheless he had good humour and an ability to describe situations with depth and wisdom. I always went away with a renewed sense of well-being and faith in humanity. For this and for his many contributions, I owe Dr. Kay my gratitude.

Germaine LaBerge
Interviewer/Editor

June 10, 1994
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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Harold Kay, M.D.
 Date of birth 8-28-09 Birthplace Omaha, Nebraska
 Father's full name Joseph Kay
 Occupation Merchant Birthplace Russia
 Mother's full name Anna Lesser Kay
 Occupation Housewife Birthplace Chicago, Ill.
 Your spouse Francis Simon Kay
 Occupation Housewife Birthplace Co. Bluffs, Iowa
 Your children Robert Kay, M.D.
Steven Kay
 Where did you grow up? Berkeley, Ca.
 Present community Piedmont, Ca.
 Education Berkeley Schools, Univ. of California (Berkeley)
Creighton Medical (Omaha, Neb.) Univ. of Calif
 Occupation(s) Physician + Surgeon Medical School '37
 Areas of expertise Urology
 Other interests or activities County, State & Natl. Medical Associations, Rotary, Volunteer Service Organizations
 Organizations in which you are active None at present.

I FAMILY BACKGROUND, CHILDHOOD, AND EDUCATION

[Interview 1: January 20, 1994]###

Parents Come to Berkeley

LaBerge: This is the first interview with Dr. Harold Kay on January 20, 1994. Why don't we start with you telling me about where you were born and a little bit about your parents?

Kay: I was born in Omaha, Nebraska, on August 28, 1909. At the age of three, we left Omaha and came to Berkeley, California.

LaBerge: What prompted the move for your parents?

Kay: My father was in business in Omaha with his brothers, and they expanded and they asked him to leave. He came here because my mother's brother had already--was here in Oakland. Came here to Berkeley because it was close by, and he went into the Lincoln Market in Berkeley, an old establishment there.

LaBerge: So is that what he did?

Kay: Yes. He ran the Lincoln Market in Berkeley.

LaBerge: Was it like a grocery store?

Kay: It was a meat market and grocery store, on University Avenue where Shattuck runs into it.

LaBerge: So is that where McDonald's is now?

Kay: No, I think Thrifty's there now.

LaBerge: Okay.

Kay: The street goes right into it. You know, when you go down Shattuck Avenue, you have to turn left. If you kept going, you'd go right into the store.

LaBerge: Oh, okay.

Kay: It's Thrifty.

LaBerge: Oh, there's a Thrifty, I think; you're right. Was he in that business also in Nebraska?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: Did your mother's brother also work here?

Kay: Yes, he had a market in Oakland.

LaBerge: So it was sort of in the family. What were your parents' names?

Kay: Anne Lesser Kay, and Joseph Kay.

LaBerge: Can you tell me anything about their background? Were they born in the United States?

Kay: My father was born in Russia. My mother was born in Chicago.

LaBerge: Anything interesting in how they met or their background?

Kay: I know nothing about it. Very interesting to know nothing about it. I know they got married at a very young age. They celebrated a sixty-third wedding anniversary.

LaBerge: Wow. Did you know your grandparents?

Kay: Yes, I did. I had met them several times.

LaBerge: Did they live in Omaha?

Kay: They lived in Omaha. My father's grandparents, my mother's father lived here in Oakland. Came to Oakland from Kansas City many years before.

LaBerge: Do you have brothers and sisters?

Kay: One brother and one sister.

LaBerge: Older, younger?

Kay: I have an older brother and a younger sister. Fortunately, both graduates of the University of California.

LaBerge: What are their names?

Kay: Sidney is my brother, and Shirley is my sister. My brother lives in San Francisco; my sister lives in Stockton.

LaBerge: So you were the middle child.

Kay: I was the middle child.

LaBerge: Did that have any effect on you, the way psychologists talk?

Kay: No. None at all.

LaBerge: Was your mother a homemaker?

Kay: Yes. After many years--at first, she was working with my father.

LaBerge: In the market?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: Did you also work in the market?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: What did you do there?

Kay: Everything. Everything. I worked mainly in the delicatessen and the poultry department. I drove in the summertime; we had delivery service. This is a thing of the past.

LaBerge: Yes. I remember growing up in Michigan having delivery service.

Kay: So I knew pretty much Berkeley, as it existed then. Not now.

LaBerge: Did you get your license before age sixteen then? Were you doing this--?

Kay: I think fourteen.

LaBerge: Did your brother and sister also work in the market?

Kay: My brother did, yes, in the latter years.

Recollections of World War I

LaBerge: Can you tell me something about your schooling in Berkeley?

Kay: Yes, I'll tell you about the schooling in Berkeley. I went to Washington Elementary School kindergarten, first through sixth grades. The school still exists.

LaBerge: On the corner of Martin Luther King, is it?

Kay: Yes, Martin Luther King and I forgot what the other street is. The thing I recall mostly about that was when I was in kindergarten, there was World War I. Each one had a garden, you had to have a garden and take care of it.

LaBerge: At school?

Kay: Yes, at school. It was held behind the church that's right there, one of the churches there--I've forgotten it now--but they gave the backyard for this. We all had a little--.

LaBerge: Was it called a victory garden or--?

Kay: Yes. It wasn't victory yet; it was a war garden.

LaBerge: So what did you grow there?

Kay: I grew radishes.

LaBerge: Anything else you remember about World War I?

Kay: Yes, I remember very well during the influenza thing. I will describe that to you: we all had garlic around our necks on a string to keep the flu away. We wore masks when we went to school because of the flu, during that. I remember selling newspapers--I guess I was four or five, five or six--extras when the war was declared, and when the war was over. We had no radio or any communication except the papers. That's the way we did it.

I always remember when the war was over, on November eleventh at eleven o'clock at night we got out of bed and went up to Center Street and Shattuck, where there was a big celebration held. There was a Southern Pacific station there, and the city band. The fire department was there, police department. They had bands and everything. Of course, most people don't remember that.

LaBerge: No, for sure. So at eleven p.m., that would just happen to be California time when the news came through?

Kay: Yes, the news came through.

LaBerge: Did you know anybody who was fighting in the war?

Kay: No. A couple of relatives were in the war, but never fought overseas. They were here.

I remember the other thing about World War I was where Berkeley High athletic field is now, was a big empty lot, and they were training pilots from Cal how to manipulate little planes. I forgot what they called them, but the pilots were trained there. They would go up about ten feet and then come down on that big area, that lot, which is now a football field.

LaBerge: Would you go over there as children to just watch?

Kay: Watch it, yes. Just went there to watch it. I don't think these things are important.

LaBerge: Oh, they are. There aren't enough people who are telling me stories, or who would even know that--this is sort of part of history of Berkeley, too, and how it's developed.

Kay: Well, I could tell you a lot about that. But that's about all I can remember about World War I.

The City of Berkeley

LaBerge: You lived in that section of Berkeley?

Kay: We lived in that section of Berkeley. That section of Berkeley below Grove [now Martin Luther King, Jr. Way] had quite a few professors, had the police chief and the mayor of Berkeley at one time living there. It was a very nice--it wasn't the exclusive neighborhood; it was a nice neighborhood. The exclusive neighborhood has always been Claremont district. We even had a farm--when they say farms in Berkeley and laugh about it--about a block from us people had cows. They used to take them up to Dwight Way to be in the hills in the summertime. And then they'd bring them down and milk them. We used to see that.

LaBerge: I didn't realize until last week that Dwight stops at one point, but it keeps going up there past Panoramic.

Kay: Yes. And then I don't think people remember, but all the--where Berkeley High is, there were homes there. They moved them all down to--I'm trying to think where it is--there were two square

blocks of homes moved, and were moved down to McGee and something. There's old homes down there.

LaBerge: To make room for the high school?

Kay: Yes. And the buildings around there. Used to take a day to move a house. They rolled them; they used rollers, not wheels, but rolling blocks and roll them along the street. Which we watched as kids because there was something happening. Let's see, what else can I tell you about Berkeley?

LaBerge: Were Berkeley politics always so interesting?

Kay: No, not really. It was very conservative Berkeley politics. It was a very interesting--most of them were businessmen--very few women, of course. Thank goodness. [laughter] Very conservative.

LaBerge: Did the university dominate the town?

Kay: No. The university--there were two parts to Berkeley. One was the university which was separate, and then there was downtown Berkeley, which was separate, completely separate. In the summer time, of course, the university was practically shut down except for summer sessions. Very few people came. But there was definitely a university group and a city of Berkeley, which had nothing but home-owned stores, which have now disappeared completely, I think. I think the only--there are two stores still remaining. That would be Huston's and a jewelry store.

LaBerge: Oh, Lee Frank's?

Kay: Frank's. And that's about the only ones that were existing before, now that many of the branches all came in. People I don't think realize that we had two trains. Southern Pacific had electric trains that served Berkeley from San Francisco, the ferry to San Francisco, and Key Route. The Key Routes went on one side of Shattuck, and the other one went on the other side of Shattuck. Key Route ended at University. There was a Southern Pacific station there for years. It was two blocks there, sort of a triangle like. That was the Southern Pacific station. They used to bring the mail in, in the mail car, every day in the morning by steam train, leave it there during the day, and then the outgoing mail.

People traveled by the trains and ferries to San Francisco, and then they got excited, they put in a Berkeley ferry, which was at the end of University Avenue. And of course, the Oakland ferries and car ferry. You could take a streetcar for a nickel

from Berkeley and go all the way to Alameda. What else do you want to know?

LaBerge: What would you do for entertainment as kids growing up in Berkeley? Is that go to Alameda beach, or go to San Francisco?

Kay: In the summertime, we went to Alameda beaches. Otherwise, we played baseball. What the kids do today, never heard of soccer and there wasn't basketball, or very much of it. Except organized basketball games.

City Schools and Boy Scouts

LaBerge: Well, then, where did you go to junior high, after Washington School?

Kay: Garfield Junior High, which is now called I guess Martin Luther King. At the present location of it, it had just moved there when I went. It had been where--Garfield had been where the Rose and Shattuck Avenue, that whole big area, that block, that's where the old school was. Then they moved down to where they are now. For the first three years there, we had no sidewalks, so when it rained, it was all muddy.

We had quite a school. In fact, quite a few of the people at Cal today went to Garfield. And then I remember having a drive to build an auditorium there. That was successful. We had another drive to build a gymnasium, and that was successful. By drives, I mean we went out to the public to get the funds.

LaBerge: Did the students participate?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: Selling tickets, or--?

Kay: Selling tickets, and having shows and things like that.

LaBerge: Did you become involved in scouting when you were there?

Kay: When I was involved in scouting--I guess was there. I went all through scouting except I came three merit badges short. The reason of that was in those days, we had to take a bird merit badge. Charles Keeler, an old-time Berkeley poet laureate, was on the board. We used to go before a board. He was into birds, and he questioned. Once you passed him, you were over it, but I

never did pass him. He was dynamite. I still remember him. But he's a famous Berkeley person.

LaBerge: Was he Berkeley poet laureate?

Kay: I think so.

LaBerge: He must have had something to do with the scouts, also?

Kay: Yes, he was. He was on the board of review. We called it court of honor. [laughs] You had a hard time passing bird study with him. So I never did become an Eagle Scout. I went through scouting with Fred Stripp,¹ if you remember him.

LaBerge: I sure do. I interviewed him right before he died. And we have a picture in his volume, in fact, of him as an Eagle Scout with-- I don't know, four or five other--

Kay: He passed the bird study.

LaBerge: He passed the bird study. [laughing] Well, it must have been tough.

Kay: It was. I went up twice and failed it, and then gave up. Two different times. Then in scouting, we had a scout camp in north Berkeley. We used to go overnight. We'd take a streetcar to the end of the line, what's now Kensington, and walk about two miles to a camp. It was not an official camp, but our troop used to go there on weekends. Then it became the Berkeley Camp; I don't know whether it's still there or not, north Berkeley.

LaBerge: I don't know if there is one there. There might be a park or something now. I don't know.

Kay: Used to be there. That's about all about scouting. I have a picture downstairs, but I don't know where it is, of scouting when we had a drive for something during the war, or right after the war. They took a picture of me for some reason, with a flour sack or something. But I can't recall exactly what it was about.

LaBerge: From there, you went to Berkeley High School, is that right?

Kay: Berkeley High.

¹See Fred Sheridan Stripp, Jr., "Fred Stripp: University Debate Coach, Berkeley Civic Leader, and Pastor," an oral history conducted in 1990 by Germaine LaBerge, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1990.

LaBerge: And what memorable experiences did you have there? Any particular teachers who influenced you?

Kay: One of the teachers at Garfield was a Mrs. Smith that I remember very well. She had been at Washington and then came to Garfield. She was a music teacher. But I never became musical. And then at Berkeley High, there was a Mr. Grey in English. A Mr. Winter was the Shakespearean teacher, and I remember him very well. He used to play the part of the dog in one of the Shakespearean plays that has a dog in it. He used to get on the floor and act like the dog. Everybody waited for that.

I was not a very good student at Berkeley High. I played football at only 130 pounds, on the football team, and played basketball, at 130 pounds--basketball team. I got to the end of my second year and realized I had no--I shouldn't tell you this--I had no--I think I had a C average. Therefore, I couldn't get into college.

Deciding to Go to Cal

Kay: But at that time, the principal had the right, if he thought a student was all right, to give him his credits to go to school--college. So I went in to see the principal, who was [Carl] Biedenbach.

LaBerge: Oh, do you know his daughter?

Kay: Yes. His daughter [Jane Biedenbach Koll] is a very good friend of my sister's.

LaBerge: Okay. Because I interviewed her when I interviewed Mike Koll,² too. So what did Mr. Biedenbach--?

Kay: If I would get all straight A's my senior year, he would recommend me to college. And I got all straight A's my last year, after a C average.

LaBerge: Wow. In your home, was it assumed you would go to college? Was there--?

²See Michael J. Koll, "The Lair of the Bear and the Alumni Association, 1949-1993," an oral history conducted in 1991-1993 by Germaine LaBerge, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1993.

Kay: It was definitely. My brother had gone to college, and I had to go. So I did it.

LaBerge: So you were definitely encouraged at home.

Kay: Definitely. In fact, my mother went with me in the discussion with Biedenbach, in his decision to--I got all straight A's, because I never had an A prior to that time.

LaBerge: Were you interested in science in high school, or no special interest?

Kay: No special ones, no.

LaBerge: Did you know what you wanted to do at that point?

Kay: No, I didn't know what I wanted to do at that point. I had to go to college. So I did.

LaBerge: Was it always going to be the university, or did you have any other--?

Kay: There was no place else but Cal. During high school years, we used to always go up there. Of course, the football games. I shouldn't tell you, but the old California field had wire around it, and we had cut the wire. We closed it up during the week, and it was the way of our getting into the game, and to track meets, and everything else. A group of us had made that arrangement.

LaBerge: Were you all high school students who did this?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: Is this where Edwards Field is now?

Kay: Yes, it's where Edwards Field is now. That was the main football field and track field. Totally open stadium.

LaBerge: Well tell me, what prompted Mr. Biedenbach to--

Kay: Apparently--

LaBerge: --he must have seen something in you that--

Kay: I don't know. My mother took me there.

LaBerge: You think your mother influenced this?

Kay: Yes. And wanted to get me into college. So she asked him what could he do, and that's what he said. Apparently, he didn't think I'd do it. So the last year, I became [a member of] the honor society and all those other things that the straight-A's do.

LaBerge: Was your brother still at Cal when you started?

Kay: No, he graduated in '26, and I started in '27.

LaBerge: What did you start out majoring in?

Kay: Pre-med.

LaBerge: So you must have had some idea that you were going to go on.

Kay: Yes. My mother thought I should go into medicine.

LaBerge: So you did what she told you.

Kay: Yes. That's how I started. Of course, I always had the opportunity of going back to work in the market if I failed.

LaBerge: Did you want to do that?

Kay: No. That's why I went to medical school--went to Cal.

LaBerge: How many science classes had you taken in high school?

Kay: Only the ones required.

Naval ROTC in College and The Panama Canal

LaBerge: Well, tell me a little bit about your college days. Did you live at home?

Kay: I lived at home. We lived on the north side up on Rose Street, had to walk to school. A man by the name of [Admiral Chester] Nimitz lived about a block and a half from me, and I used to go to school, would walk down with him many times, because that was the naval ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps], and he was commander.

LaBerge: Oh, this is Admiral Nimitz?

Kay: Admiral Nimitz. He was commander then, and then became a captain. He used to walk to school with me quite often, just so happened the same time we'd leave. Which was interesting. What else do you want to know about it?

LaBerge: How did you happen to go into the naval ROTC? Was that a way to finance your education, or--?

Kay: It was just something, we had to go into either--at those days, you either went into the army ROTC or the naval ROTC.

LaBerge: Oh, I see, it wasn't a choice.

Kay: And I had a choice, because I was in the second class of naval ROTC. It had just started, and they had nicer uniforms. They had nicer trips in the summer.

LaBerge: So how much time did that mean?

Kay: It was drill once a week, and two classes during the week. I continued for four years. The last two years, they paid you. It was ten or fifteen dollars. The naval ROTC was a very interesting thing. In my sophomore or junior year, three of us-- I can't think of the names of the other two--had an opportunity to go in a battleship through the [Panama] Canal to New York. That was an interesting trip.

LaBerge: Oh, I bet it was.

Kay: We went to Panama, Cuba, and two of us--one was going on to France to give a student lecture in French at the university there or something, and the other one and I had made plans to come back on a freighter. We were all set, got a job as deckhands on the freighter to bring us back through the Canal. But going up the East Coast, the ship had trouble, and we were two days late getting into where we were supposed to be in, and the ship we were to meet had left. So we were stranded in New York with five or ten dollars in our pockets, and no way to get home, because my father had said, "Don't call for money to get home. You went on this trip, and you have to get home now."

So I had an uncle who lived in New York. I went to work for six weeks there and made enough money to come home. I came as far as Omaha where my grandmother was, and she gave me the rest of the money.

LaBerge: Oh, sure, you could touch Grandma for--[laughs]

Meeting Frances Simon

LaBerge: So you took a train from New York to Omaha?

Kay: Yes, a train from New York to Omaha. And that was, I should tell you, when I first met my wife on that trip out West as a blind date.

LaBerge: This was 1929, is that right?

Kay: Yes, right.

##

LaBerge: You were just going to tell me how you met your wife in Omaha.

Kay: I was in Omaha for two nights and two days. I was leaving Sunday morning. Saturday afternoon, I got a call. A cousin of mine said, "This poor girl's date--." There was a big party that night, which of course I was not invited to. This poor girl's date was coming from out of town, and he cancelled her at four-thirty in the afternoon. And would I please take this girl, just to take her out there, just so she had an escort, and that would be all. And it turned out to be my future wife. But I only met her that one evening, and I left, forgetting about her, and came home the next day.

LaBerge: Did she also forget about you?

Kay: Yes. Then we met nine years later.

LaBerge: Do you want to tell me that story now, while we're on it, how you met nine years later?

Kay: Well, it was the same type of thing. I had just finished my residency at Highland [Hospital] and went down to interview with a cousin of mine who was a practicing physician in Los Angeles. I was there for three days or four days, and sitting around that first night, my same cousin said to me, "What are you doing in Los Angeles? Why don't you go out?" I said, "I don't know anybody in Los Angeles." She said, "You remember so-and-so from Omaha. You had a date with her." I said, "Faintly." She said, "Would you go out with her?" I said, "Okay, fix me up." And that was it.

LaBerge: And by this time, had she moved to Los Angeles?

Kay: She had moved to Los Angeles in '30, I guess it was. She graduated in '31 from UCLA [University of California at Los Angeles].

Angeles]. We met, and then had our two nights there. Then I came up north, and she came up here. We had a total of six dates before we got married.

LaBerge: My goodness. I guess you were old enough to know your own mind by that time.

Kay: I guess so.

LaBerge: So she came up here, and you lived up here.

Kay: Well, she came up here to visit, but then we got married in Los Angeles, then came up here. Because nobody lives in Los Angeles. [with twinkle in eye] Don't put that in. [laughter] Because UCLA may get mad at me.

LaBerge: They could. What was her background? What did she major in at UCLA?

Kay: She majored in economics. She only had one year at UCLA. She was two years at the University of Chicago, one year at the University of Nebraska, then UCLA.

Trip Through the Panama Canal, 1929

LaBerge: So let's see. We were doing the summer between your sophomore and junior year--

Kay: When I went to New York.

LaBerge: What was that like, to go through the Panama Canal?

Kay: Well, there is an interesting story. You have to realize the tradition of the navy. Apparently, classes were very important. The class of '28, I guess, they were junior officers on board the ship. The three of us lived with them, the junior officers. Coming West, the class of '28 had put on a party in Panama City for the class of '29. Going back, the class of '29 put on a party for '28, and it was quite a party in Panama City.

It was interesting, we being the three of us, they gave us jobs to kind of train us what to do on a ship. For example, we were put on navigation, each one was to spend some time in navigation. I ended my navigation by putting the ship on dry land in the middle of Nicaragua. We had to spot where we were all the time. That was interesting.

Then they put us in the engine room for three days while we went through the canal, which was very interesting. It was quite hot down there. I mean, these are watches, four on and four off, watches. Now, it's very interesting because the ship we were on had two-and-a-half feet short of the width of the canal--if it had been two-and-a-half feet wider, we couldn't have gone through the canal. So they had a lot of trouble going through, and we had to watch how close we were to the walls of the canal, because the side of the ship, people didn't know that below there were bellows sticking out for torpedoes that would be exploded outside the ship.

And while in Panama, they had one plane on the battleship, and they took us, if we wanted to go, for a ride over the canal, we had the use of the planes. So they had us catapulted off the ship in an airplane, and went over the canal and came back. It was a very nice trip.

LaBerge: Had you ever been on a plane before?

Kay: No. We said we had been. That was the story of that.

LaBerge: Had you ever been out of California--other than living in Omaha and moving?

Kay: No.

LaBerge: So this was really something.

Kay: Right. Oh, we went to Haiti, too. That was quite an episode that we went to Haiti, Port-au-Prince. We were told in Panama we didn't have to wear uniforms to shore, but in Haiti it was absolutely necessary to wear a uniform to shore.

LaBerge: Because?

Kay: Because the feeling they had, the Haitians, for us. There had been a great marine detachment down there trying to help them out. Voodooism was prominent down there, and they played the voodoo drums until they dropped dead sometimes. So the marines were taking away their voodoo drums, and we had heard about that. So we went to the marines to see if we could get voodoo drums. They said they couldn't give them out to us.

We did take a car out into what we called "boondocks," into the country, and the natives threw rocks at the car when they saw the uniforms. So we had to turn around and come back. Then our driver had a man with him who, he said, "You pay him." We said, "We didn't hire him." He said, "You pay him." But fortunately,

it was at the marine headquarters where all this was taking place, so one of the marines came over and said, "Are you having trouble?" We told him. He said, "You go on into the commandant's house where there is a reception. I'll take care of them."

So we were afraid after that. We did not go out at night the three nights we were in Haiti, because of the fear of being in uniform. They didn't like Americans at that time at all. And they still don't, apparently.

LaBerge: How about Cuba?

Kay: Cuba, we were on our own. We did not have to wear uniforms. We were there two days, in Havana. It was quite an open city in those days.

LaBerge: Do you want to expand on that?

Kay: No, I'd better not expand on that. [laughter] There were a lot of night clubs.

LaBerge: And no ill will toward Americans?

Kay: None at all. No, they were happy with us.

LaBerge: What did you do in New York for your uncle to--?

Kay: Well, he had just taken over some bankrupt stores there, grocery stores. So I helped him do the inventory.

LaBerge: You were--?

Kay: I lived at his house. Before I contacted him, I had lived in my fraternity house there. They asked for a dollar a day. I spent a dollar a day for food. Used to go to the--I forget the name of the place--

LaBerge: Horn and Hardart?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: Yes. I went to school in New York.

Kay: And had one meal a day.

LaBerge: What was your fraternity?

Kay: Zeta Beta Tau. You've heard of it?



Harold Kay, circa 1931.

LaBerge: I have, but I don't know what the different fraternities are.

Kay: Louis Heilbron--did you do Louis Heilbron?

LaBerge: I didn't, but someone did. Did he belong to the same one?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: So you stayed there in New York--was it Columbia's or NYU's [New York University]--?

Kay: Columbia's, 125th [Street]. In those days, it wasn't quite as bad. I slept there. The other fellow with me slept with me, but he went home earlier. He got money from his father and he went home. That was three or four days before I even found my uncle. I found my uncle by calling home, reversing the charges. They told me where he was, because I didn't know where he was. He lived in New Jersey, so I went over and stayed with him and stayed there six weeks to get enough money to come home.

LaBerge: Well, thankfully you had the time before school started, I guess, to do that.

Kay: I got home a week before school started. We had planned the trip on the freighter, which was going to take that long to come home. We did go down to the waterfront every day, trying to get a job, but there were no jobs. That was an experience, to see these people waiting to get jobs on the waterfront, what was going on there.

LaBerge: Because this is right in the midst of the Depression, isn't it?

Kay: It was just before the Depression. Just before. So we were glad we were going to college and not being a deckhand.

Berkeley Campus and The First Time Stanford Stole the Axe. 1930

LaBerge: Was it difficult to finance your way through college?

Kay: No.

LaBerge: Because the fees were so low and--?

Kay: Fees were so low, and we didn't do very much. My father paid the fraternity fees for me. I didn't work during college at all. No, I take that back: I worked on Friday afternoons and

Saturdays in the store to get money for my recreation, which was--I got paid five dollars, and that was usually gone by the end of the weekend. Very quickly. In those days, you took dates out on the streetcar. Sometimes I got use of the car.

LaBerge: Did you have one family car?

Kay: One family car.

LaBerge: So it would be hard to all have the use of it. Where would you go on the streetcar for entertainment?

Kay: To the theaters, and shows.

LaBerge: Did you ever live in the fraternity house?

Kay: No.

LaBerge: So you lived at home the whole time--that also probably made it a lot cheaper, to live at home.

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: I know you were involved in some things on campus, at least when you were a senior. What activities?

Kay: Junior--I mean during school, I was on the Rally Committee. In my senior year, I was chairman of the Reception Committee, which was a group of juniors--sophomores, rather, who were the reception for all the football, and all the people coming to the campus. I don't know whether they have it now or not.

LaBerge: I don't know if they do, either.

Kay: I was on the Rally Committee when the Axe was stolen. I remember that very well.

LaBerge: The Axe was stolen by Berkeley, or by Stanford?

Kay: By Stanford. That was the first time they stole it.

LaBerge: Oh, my. What year was that?

Kay: Was that '30? I believe it was '30. We always used to take it down to the bank at the corner of Center and Shattuck and leave it there. We got it down there, and it was the people who took it from us.

LaBerge: You were actually in the group?

Kay: [nods]

LaBerge: So you would take it to the bank, like to the safety deposit box?

Kay: Yes, after--yes. And we went down there, and these people said, "We'll take that from you." It was a Stanford group.

LaBerge: You didn't know it was the Stanford group? Oh, my gosh.

Kay: No. They had stolen our caps, so they were wearing rally caps.

LaBerge: What were your favorite courses when you were in college, or any--?

Kay: None.

LaBerge: None? Any memorable teachers?

Kay: [pause] There was one in economics whose name was--what--

LaBerge: Oh, I'm trying to think--Ira Cross?

Kay: Ira Cross. That's the one that I guess would be the best. Otherwise, there was no one in particular.

LaBerge: Did you take a lot of economics courses?

Kay: Well, that's an interesting story. I took, of course, all the pre-med courses. Came to--applied to Cal medical school. I had forgotten about a one-unit physics course which was given only one semester, so they wouldn't accept me without that. And then I realized--I had never realized any of this, but I was surprised when the subject came up. So it was the end of my junior year. I decided that I had to have something in case I didn't get into medical school, so I went into international relations, the School of Economics--anyway. I took twenty-six units for two semesters to get all the basics in everything in economics, public relations and so forth. Of course, they would only give me credit for sixteen. The other I had to take, so I had all kinds of econ courses to take. I'm trying to think what other courses I took--anyway. And international law court, and things like that.

My training in medicine, pre-med courses, made it very easy for me to take the twenty-six units. I went to school Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, classes all day long from eight to six. Tuesdays and Thursdays I had the navy, and time to study. So I got by that very well, considering there were so many units.

Two Medical Schools' Philosophies: Creighton University and UCSF

Kay: I went to Creighton University School of Medicine for two years in Omaha. At the end of two years there, I had a 97-point average. Came back here and applied to Cal. I first applied to Cal, went over and saw the dean, "Sorry, there's no room in the class."

LaBerge: And this is UCSF [University of California, San Francisco]?

Kay: UCSF.

LaBerge: Do you know the dean's name?

Kay: No. But I had a very good friend over here, the provost of the University of California was--

LaBerge: Oh, you told me: Monroe Deutsch.

Kay: Monroe Deutsch. So I went and saw Monroe, and I told him the situation. He got on the phone, and he said, "The dean wants to see you tomorrow morning at the medical school." So I went over there, and he accepted me. He said, "We'll accept you with basic grades of C, but not your grades from Creighton." "Yes, I'll accept C." "And you may have to take special courses--to come up to our standards, you'll have to do such-and-such during the summer," which I did. I spent time in San Francisco doing extra physical diagnosis and a lot of stuff and laboratory work.

This is just a sideline, but in the middle of all this, I got a phone call from a laboratory man. He called me and said, "I want you to come up here, I'm going to check you, an examination." "Fine." So I went up, and he had put out twenty specimens for me to read, and give him the answers. I went through the twenty. Several of them--he hadn't seen them for maybe four or five months, blood studies and stuff like that.

So I got seven out of the twenty right. That was terrible. He said, "I just don't know what I'm going to do about that. But I'll tell you, one of my students from your class who's right over there, I'll call him over and show you how well they're trained." So he put him through, and he got five. [laughter] So he said, "Oh, I guess it doesn't work that way." So he passed me.

During that six months, they kept pulling me in for different examinations. At the end of six months, and I had done fairly well in the classes, average, and they called me and said,

"You need to be at the medical school tomorrow morning, we want you to be examined by some doctor," just after finals.

So I went in before a board of about six cardiologists, interns, and they quizzed me for about two hours and they said, "Okay, you pass." That was the end of it. Then there was--so really for six months, I was on trial, because they had never taken anybody from Creighton. Creighton was a class-A school along with UCSF, but two different philosophies. Creighton trained you for going out into Nebraska to practice, or into any boondocks to practice, in general practice. At Cal, they trained you to be specialists and research people. So you got that difference in philosophy.

LaBerge: Which did you like better?

Kay: Well, it's hard to say. Creighton was more family-associated. You knew your professors, you could go up and talk to them, talk to them. At Cal, it was a little difficult. They were too busy.

An interesting thing was after we--this is another story just to show you an example. When we had been to Europe, I guess that first year, Edinburgh, came back, and on our way back we stopped in Omaha and I went down to Creighton. The office girl said, "Dr. Kay, so glad to see you." They welcomed me after all these years, and remembered me and all that. I went to Cal, and they didn't know who the hell I was. I was just a student, just a doctor. No welcome. That was so different that after just a little bit of Creighton they remembered me.

LaBerge: It was probably to your benefit that you had both experiences.

Kay: I think so. The two different experiences, very different. And I get letters from both asking for money.

Majoring in International Relations

LaBerge: [laughs] Well, back to your undergraduate days: did you graduate then with a degree in international relations, or--?

Kay: I got an A.B. in international relations.

LaBerge: What did you think you'd do with that, if that was the route you were going to take?

Kay: I didn't know. I would either go on or find something to do with it. But I had some basis of something to do. At that time, international relations was early, it was a new school. It was new. It was an interesting thing to study.

LaBerge: How about the economics, did that help you later on when you had to set up practice and--?

Kay: A little bit; very little. You had to have econ courses. I was taking undergraduate courses and graduate courses, and all kinds of courses at the same time. But the orientation or organization of pre-medical school organized my mind so that I could read one book and think about three courses out of it.

LaBerge: So it was good training, then?

Kay: Excellent. In fact, I have to say that for pre-med.

LaBerge: I know that your mother wanted you to go on to medicine, but you must have had something within you that kept you going at it, some interest.

Kay: In medicine, I was interested. Of course, the idea of enrolling at Creighton came because this cousin of mine was back there.

LaBerge: Was he a professor, is that right?

Kay: Yes, ear, nose, and throat.

LaBerge: What was his name?

Kay: Kully.

LaBerge: But to put in all that time and effort, you must have had some kind of drive or--

Kay: Well, I had a drive to go on, because it was just something to do. To have something to fall back on. Of course, I always had the store to fall back on, but I didn't like it too well.

LaBerge: What did your brother do at Cal?

Kay: At Cal, he was the managing editor of the Daily Cal. I did that--freshman year I went on the Cal staff, managing the advertising department. But I didn't like it. He had been the manager--not managing editor, the manager of the Daily Cal, their business part. So that's what I was doing, I went out and got ads. But I didn't like that too well. I guess I did that my freshman year.

LaBerge: It seems like you got involved in a lot of things on campus, that you were in the midst of the activities.

Kay: Yes. And Senior Week, of course. But with being on the Rally Committee and Reception Committee, I was busy. And the Blue and Gold, I was in there, at '31.

LaBerge: I'm going to go back to the office and look it up.

The Class of '31 Committee

Kay: Class of '31. I'm in there, I think.

LaBerge: You obviously kept up those friendships.

Kay: Very much so. Kept up with the chairman of the class a few years--

LaBerge: Mr. Holabird?

Kay: No, he's on the committee. I already knew him. See, when it came to our fiftieth reunion two years before, he called me and asked me if I would work on it, if I would take the foundation, if it is called that, gave money for them. What do you call it?

LaBerge: Endowment?

Kay: Not endowment, to raise money for the class. And so I got active out there with the foundation office.

LaBerge: Oh, in the Berkeley Foundation?

Kay: Yes. I think her name was Susan--. God, these names go by. Anyway, it was this Susan who was running it, she and I decided on the--and then we had the little committee, but a very little committee. And then we'd meet, and that's when we got very active and decided to take on oral histories. Nobody knew what oral history was, and we had our oral history. We sold the idea of our oral history to our committee. It was tough. Most of these people--a lot of these people dropped out of college because of the Depression. When they got out of college, they were getting jobs. They all made a success, but they didn't want to do a lot of running back to the university. We had an awful time getting contributions. We got donations of five dollars, and I felt sorry that we couldn't raise more than we did.

When we had our fiftieth reunion, only about 350 came, out of 1,400 available.

LaBerge: I guess that's not so many, out of 1,400. It sounds like a lot.

Kay: We had 1,600 in the class; 1,400 were still alive or active. We got 350, from all over the country. Then we decided--that was sort of a steering committee, was Alan Browne, a fellow named Garwood in Berkeley, Lois Swabel, Fran Garron, Jean Armstrong, Catherine McCloud. There were about eight of us, or ten of us. Adrian [Kragen] of course. And we got together and decided that we should have the reunion at fifty-fifth and then have a reunion every year of people around here. That's the way we've all kept together.

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LaBerge: You were talking more about your class and the reunions.

Kay: That we had each year.

LaBerge: Every year now.

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: Anything we've left out of your college experience? What about your fraternity experience? You didn't live at the house, but what were the activities?

Kay: Well, as anybody active socially in a fraternity.

LaBerge: Have lots of parties, and--?

Kay: Well, you used to have parties. And you have the annual party, initiation party. I made some friends that are still with me. In fact, last week one of them came over here and we had lunch together, another doctor. I kept up with several, but not too many. A lot of them were in San Francisco, and several in L.A. In Berkeley, one of my friends; another fraternity brother went back to Oakridge [Tennessee] during the war, and is still back there. Mayor of Oakridge; stayed on. He was a chemist. That's about all. We socialized a lot, but several--one, two, three, four, five--I can't count--have died in my class in the fraternity. Just one or two of them still alive.

Influences of Mother and Religion

LaBerge: In all your schooling in any of those years, not just teachers, but were there any particular adults that influenced you in any way as to what paths to take in life, or encouraged you particularly?

Kay: No, not at the university or anything before.

LaBerge: How about your mother? It sounds like your mother was involved somewhat.

Kay: She was very involved all through everything, yes. She was very active and founded the California Alliance of Jewish Women. Our basement at home was filled with clothes for kids to come up there and get clothes during the Depression. People donated stuff, and we had clothing in the basement, a whole wardrobe. She gave, was in charge of giving money to students who needed scholarships.

LaBerge: To college?

Kay: To college, during college years. Quite a few of the people got through school that way.

LaBerge: Had either of your parents been to college?

Kay: Neither one. It wasn't the thing to go to college in those days. Then when I went to college, out of my high school class at Berkeley, I think there were only about a third of it left, less than a third went to college. In high school, we had a little club. We called ourselves the Bachelors' Club, fourteen of us. We kept up all through the years. There were fourteen of us. Three of us went to college, to Berkeley. So that was--we're now down to fourteen at the last meeting, down to four members--three members.

LaBerge: But you've kept meeting all these years?

Kay: We met off and on, yes. Took the wives.

LaBerge: What kind of religious background did you have growing up?

Kay: Jewish.

LaBerge: Were you practicing?

Kay: Yes. My mother was very active in that.

LaBerge: Did you go to the temple in Berkeley?

Kay: There wasn't a temple in Berkeley. My father started that years later. We went to Oakland, Temple Sinai.

LaBerge: Okay, where you go now. So which temple did your father start?

Kay: Two of them in Berkeley. The one down on Bancroft, Orthodox one, and then there's Beth-El, which is on--is it Cedar Street?

LaBerge: I think it is. But you didn't grow up in an Orthodox family, or did you?

Kay: No. Very Reformed. Very.

LaBerge: So did you go to religious school to learn Hebrew?

Kay: I went to religious school, not to learn Hebrew, because they didn't teach us that in those days. A little smattering here and a little smattering there. I was bar mitzvah'd and confirmed. And while we are on this, in 1941, I started the Berkeley Lodge of B'nai B'rith, and was president of that. And of course, then the war came, and that was the end of that for me. I was on the board of the temple for about eight years.

LaBerge: This is after the war?

Kay: Yes. And after the war, I was on the Jewish Federation for about eight years. Board of directors. That was my contact with that. Now, you've got the machine on?

LaBerge: Yes.

Yehudi Menuhin

Kay: We had our Sunday school in Berkeley, on Center Street, upstairs. My teacher was Mrs. Menuhin, if you've ever heard of the Menuhins. Yehudi Menuhin?

LaBerge: Oh, yes I have!

Kay: You've heard of him?

LaBerge: Yes.

Kay: It was his mother.

LaBerge: You are kidding!

Kay: That's another part of my life. They came to Berkeley broke, mother and father went to school, and they had this baby, Yehudi. My folks used to send them food, clothing, money. They've been friends of ours ever since.

LaBerge: Was he the same age as you?

Kay: No, I was older. He's the same age as my sister. We've seen him and know him very well. In fact, my folks and his folks were friends for years. In fact, every time he had a concert, there were two tickets for my mother and father.

LaBerge: Did you know, as he was growing up, that he was gifted?

Kay: Oh, yes. When I was thirteen, he played the violin at my house. The day of my bar mitzvah. He was, what, eight I think then. Seven. Yes, we watched him grow up.

LaBerge: I didn't realize that he grew up in Berkeley.

Kay: He was in Berkeley, and then he moved to San Francisco, and they lived in San Francisco. I guess he was about five when they moved to San Francisco, four. But I had to put that little in--

LaBerge: That's wonderful. See, those are the kinds of things that will pop up into your mind that are really interesting and important.

Kay: Not important, but just interesting. His mother is still alive; his father died. I haven't talked to her for about six years. There was a little trouble at the time. We're still friends. I guess it was, I don't know, three, four, five years ago, we went to see something at the--not the Opera House, the other one, across the street--

LaBerge: Davies?

Kay: No, the other one. The Opera House, I guess. Yes, at the Opera House. My wife and I were standing in the lobby there for some reason. Yehudi and his wife came in, to hear the same concert. Nobody knew who he was, but we were standing talking to him so we had a very nice conversation. An interesting sidelight.

LaBerge: Did his mother prepare you for your bar mitzvah?

Kay: No, they had gone before that. I was just a young boy.

LaBerge: Any other little treasures like that from your childhood that you can remember, other--?

Kay: I'll think of them.

LaBerge: Did you read a lot as a child, or in your family did people read?

Kay: Some, but not too much. My mother read a lot, I know. She was anxious to keep up with everything. She was quite a person. She used to get money from--go over to San Francisco and get money from people like the Haas's, Fleishhackers, and others--for students, to give them loans.

Deciding on Urology

LaBerge: Once you finished with medical school, had you decided that you were going to specialize in something?

Kay: Yes. I went on to residency after I finished my internship. I had made up my mind either to go in with my cousin in ear, nose, and throat, or just into urology as Dr. [Albert] Meads, who was my mentor in my residency at Highland. I finally decided to go into urology. At the finish of my residency, he made an offer for me to come into the office with him. I was there for three years with him.

University of Edinburgh, 1938-1939

Kay: Then we decided I needed some more work, and that's why I went in 1938 to the University of Edinburgh for a year in anatomy.

LaBerge: I think you told me before, they were famous for anatomy, is that right?

Kay: For anatomy, yes. The professor of anatomy at Cal was Saunders, who graduated from Edinburgh. And then came back here. Well, in Edinburgh, we had an interesting thing. The Munich thing took place, and we'd been there ten days. The word went out that all Americans [should] come home. So I went down to the consulate and I said, "What should we do?" "I'll tell you about it. You stay here, and I'll go home."

So then we decided to call the steamship company where we had our tickets, and we said--we couldn't get on the steamship until October. This was September.

LaBerge: September of '38, is that right?

Kay: Thirty-eight. And they informed us that if I took a reservation and didn't go, I lost my ticket. However, I was in the naval reserve now, in the medical corps. I knew where the--we had a squadron of destroyers in London. I was eligible, so I didn't worry about it.

LaBerge: And could your wife come too?

Kay: Yes. And those three days when Munich [conference] took place, everybody went to work--my wife went to work putting the gas masks together. We dug underground shelters in all the parks; it was quite hectic.

LaBerge: And this was in Edinburgh, or in London?

Kay: In Edinburgh. They had gun emplacements. This is a sideline: they had no parks protecting their navy up there, they had like a barrel from a gun at one place, and they had the firing part of it in another place. If the Germans had known--I don't know why they didn't know--but they would have gone right in and taken that without any trouble. But they prepared it anyway. And Firth of Forth--that's the famous naval station up there. That's in Edinburgh.

So we stayed on, fortunately. And everything was fine.

LaBerge: So you stayed until June of '39, or something like that?

Kay: Yes. In April of '39, I went to London for a week, and then we went to Paris. Paris had no lights. They had all these little blue lights in case of war. We arrived on a Friday, and the sirens were going off during the day that they all prepared for raids. The lights of Paris were down. It was interesting to see Paris.

LaBerge: Then did you travel more before you went home?

Kay: Just to Paris, and then back to London, and then back to Edinburgh. London was interesting; we stayed at the hotel. Cost us five dollars a day, and included breakfast for both of us. Can you believe that?

LaBerge: No.

Kay: The Cumberland Hotel was the hotel in London at that time that had central heating, and that's why we stayed there. Right at the Marble Arch. It's still there.

LaBerge: What did your wife do while you were at the university?

Kay: We had some cousins there, and she was with them. I don't know what she did, actually. We had a bed-sitting room, which was in one room, so--rented an old house right next to a beautiful garden.

LaBerge: And this was sort of like your honeymoon, is that right, too?

Kay: Yes, we had been married in January, and left here in August.

LaBerge: Did you take the steamship back, or did you take--

Kay: Yes, we took the steamship back. And that was quite a ride. They were bringing horses to the World's Fair on a freighter, so only half of the ship was full. So it would rock. It took ten days to cross.

LaBerge: Did you enjoy that trip both ways?

Kay: Enjoyed it going over; we were on the steamship. Enjoyed it coming back; there were 125 passengers, but only about twenty-five of us went to meals.

LaBerge: I see. [laughs] Was there an odor?

Kay: No, it was just so rough. My wife--

LaBerge: Oh, I see what you mean.

Kay: My wife said, "Isn't there any way--isn't there a subway or a train we could take home?" She was sick the first five days.

LaBerge: How about if we end there, and then the next time we'll start up with your--

Kay: Medical thing.

LaBerge: Yes. Well, we could start actually maybe with World War II, with what you did during World War II.

Kay: Well, we could. Yes, I guess we could.

LaBerge: Okay. How does that sound?

Kay: That sounds fair.

The Berkeley Fire, 1923

[Interview 2: January 27, 1994]###

LaBerge: Our last time, we had finished with you being in Edinburgh, and we were going to start with World War II. But before that, I just wanted to ask you if you remember the Berkeley Fire.

Kay: Very well.

LaBerge: Could you talk about that a little?

Kay: Yes, I'd be very happy to talk about that. I was going to Garfield Junior High School, and about twelve o'clock, people said, "Look at the fire coming over the hill." The Berkeley Fire had started two days before, in Orinda. It burnt itself--they knew about it. But at that time, there was a rule that nobody goes outside of their territory. So the fire came to the top of the hill, and when it got up there, they let everybody go home.

The fire started at twelve, started burning down into Berkeley. It started down towards our house. We were living at Eunice and Glen in Berkeley. My parents were out of town. My brother was at UC. I went home about one o'clock. We took out everything, took out what we thought was important--silverware, and some clothes. The fire came to Cordonices Park, which was just a block away from where we lived.

LaBerge: Did they send you home from school?

Kay: Yes. The wind changed, and so it missed us. It went on down the hill, as you know, to the university. We had a market in Berkeley, and they were getting ready to dynamite that, as they had other buildings earlier. The fires changed so often. Where the university now has a plant area, a whole big square block, I can't think of--

LaBerge: On Oxford?

Kay: On Oxford. They had just opened a new church there, and several homes. They blew that whole block up as a barrier, but the fire went over the top of it. It spread to right in back of our market on University and Shattuck, stopped right there. We had moved everything, moved the books out of the store, of course, closed the market, and moved all the food down to City Hall so they could have it for feeding people, because we couldn't use it.

About three o'clock, the wind stopped. When the wind stopped, the fire stopped. And as you most likely know, a lot of people took their furniture out, particularly fraternity houses, and put it all on the University of California field, which was an open field. The furniture burnt, but the houses didn't.

LaBerge: Oh, my goodness. No, I didn't know that.

Kay: And it swept through there in two and a half hours. Almost as bad as--seemed worse than the fire of '91. That's the story of the Berkeley Fire.

LaBerge: Wow. Now, when you're talking about "we took the things out of our house"--

Kay: My brother.

LaBerge: Just your brother and you?

Kay: Yes. My folks were in Omaha.

LaBerge: How did you get in contact with him when you were at school, or did he come get you?

Kay: He came home, and I went home. We met at home. It was quite a hectic time. Then the National Guard came in, and they set up an encampment across the street from our house. You couldn't go in and out of the area without a special pass. That went on for several weeks.

I called my folks in Omaha to tell them what had happened, and we went right through, no problem at all. But after that, we couldn't talk to them. The lines were down. We were just lucky.

The other interesting part--this may or may not--my father arrived in Omaha that night, got off the train, and there was this big headline: "Berkeley Burnt Out." He was a little concerned.

LaBerge: I bet he was! And are you and your brother the ones who also took the groceries down to City Hall, or did you have help?

Kay: We had help with the market. Because we saw it was going to burn, so we sent--took all the meat out. We didn't care about the vegetables. Sent it to City Hall to be used for refugees, and there were plenty.

LaBerge: That's a far cry from what you're hearing about people in the earthquake right now, people are sell--I don't think they are any

more, but last week they were selling water for like six dollars a gallon, and things like that.

Kay: Yes. It was nothing like that.

LaBerge: No.

Kay: We had some people whose house had been blown up come and live with us while my folks were East. I guess they lived with us for three or four weeks, because they had no place to go, and we had the house. It's almost as bad as the fire in 1991 a block here, and a block there.

LaBerge: Were you evacuated in the other fire, in the 1991?

Kay: Yes, the last night.

LaBerge: So where did you go?

Kay: My sister-in-law's, over on Trestle Glen. They evacuated us at seven o'clock that night. This side of the street, and not the other side of the street. I don't know why. That's the fire. Now, do you want to know anything more about the Fire of Berkeley, 1923?

LaBerge: Not unless you have other things to say. I had a little book on it. I had totally forgotten to ask you about it, and when I went back to the office, someone said, "Well, if he lived in Berkeley, he must have lived through the fire." And I thought that you still lived down below McGee.

Kay: No, we had moved.

LaBerge: Is that house still standing?

Kay: Yes. Eunice and Glen, Berkeley, is still there. In fact, I'm trying to think who it is--somebody's son bought it, a friend of ours, and I'm trying to think of the name of it. And then we had a big move; we went from there to Rose and Arch, which is about three blocks away. That's where I was when I went to college, we were living there. And I guess that's all about the Berkeley Fire.

Oh, incidentally, at that time, we forgot when the fire came over the hill. See, then they couldn't go outside the Berkeley limits with the fire engines. They brought over a ferry load of fire engines from San Francisco to help, came over on the ferry boat. And then is when they decided that they were going to have joint fire help, and they built Grizzly Peak Lookout following

that Berkeley Fire of 1923. It started two days before in Orinda.

LaBerge: I didn't realize that. And had it been put out there?

Kay: No, it was still burning.

LaBerge: Just kept burning.

Kay: Never realized that it would be--and suddenly, the wind came up, and bang. Just like the fire of '91.

LaBerge: How long did your parents keep the market?

Kay: From 1912 to 1963. I think so.

LaBerge: What was the name of it?

Kay: Lincoln Market.

II WORLD WAR II

Mare Island and San Francisco Naval Duty, 1941-1942

LaBerge: Okay, well, let's go into World War II.

Kay: We came back from Edinburgh, and I set up my own practice here.

LaBerge: Where was your office?

Kay: At that time, it was downtown [Oakland] on Franklin Street.

LaBerge: You were with an older doctor?

Kay: Originally, but when I came back, I came by myself. Dr. Meads helped me, but I was on my own. My wife became pregnant with our oldest son. We rented a house in north Berkeley. We were living in an apartment at the time. We rented a house in north Berkeley, moved in on December 1, 1941. The war was declared on December 7, 1941, and on December 8, I received orders to report to Mare Island on the thirteenth.

So that week, I closed up my office. We had paid first and last month's rent at the house, so we stayed there until the end of January, and then we had an apartment in Oakland. I guess that's the story of the beginning of it.

LaBerge: Where were you on December 7?

Kay: There was a board meeting of the Berkeley B'nai B'rith. I got a phone call at eleven-thirty to turn on the radio there, and we heard it. So that was the end of the board meeting; came home. We didn't know what to do at the time. It wasn't very long before we knew what to do, with the blackouts. All the things, closing the office.

And then I commuted from here to Vallejo, to Mare Island, every day with a group of doctors. I'm trying to think of where

we met. We were about five of us, drove up to Mare Island every morning, to be there at eight o'clock.

LaBerge: Did you get these orders because you were still in the naval reserve?

Kay: Naval reserve, and we had units. I was in a naval unit here in Oakland, reserve unit. The whole unit was called to Mare Island. After three months up there, my unit was sent down for training to go overseas, but I was left there, fortunately. I stayed at Mare Island then. I was transferred to San Francisco in a naval recruiting station, because my wife was pregnant. With a little inside help, I got these orders to go to San Francisco. I stayed there until December '42, and then I got orders to go to Pago Pago, American Samoa.

LaBerge: Before you go into that, your son was born then--

Kay: My son was born in April of '42.

LaBerge: For the record, do you want to give me his name?

Kay: Steven. And we gave neither son middle names, letting them pick their own, and neither one has ever picked any. And what else do you want to know?

LaBerge: Okay, so he was born in April of '42, and you were still commuting to San Francisco.

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: All right, now you're going to Samoa. Before you got to Samoa, what were you doing, just general medical practice?

Kay: No, none at all. I was doing recruiting; I was examining the recruits for the navy.

LaBerge: So it was like a general physical?

Kay: Yes, general physical, and also we had tests to see if they could become pharmacists' mates, things like that. People applied for pharmacists' mates, and we examined them and decided. We had quite an experience there. It was interesting.

LaBerge: Any episodes you want to relate?

Kay: Well, I guess the episode--I'm trying to think of the name of the fellow. A famous movie star, singer, caused a lot of confusion because they had given him an appointment way above everybody

else, and I had the pleasure of flunking him for his physical. All hell broke loose, because he was going to get this appointment regardless. I'm trying to think of his name--Tony Martin.

LaBerge: Oh, you're kidding. Why did you have to flunk him?

Kay: He had some physical thing, I forgot what it was now. But he didn't pass our regulations. And particularly not for an officer. But I was overruled by politics. I say it was my first exposure to politics.

Health Officer in Pago Pago, American Samoa, 1942-1944

Kay: I was in American Samoa for a year and a half. It seemed like eighteen years instead of eighteen months. American Samoa was a very important spot during the first part of the war, because it was our only station between Hawaii and Australia. We'd have all kinds of ships coming in, parking there overnight, because there were submarines outside. We had submarine nets, we had air balloon coverage.

American Samoa in January of '42 was shelled by the Japanese, and they shelled it twice, two different occasions, when at that time we had no military protection at all. There were machine guns and that was all. They did the same thing, they dropped the bombs in the middle of the bay, and if they had turned their guns maybe 5 degrees, they would have destroyed the base. They didn't, fortunately. American Samoa became the main interchange between here and the south. We had one night as high as 147 ships in the harbor.

General Practice

Kay: The experience there was remarkable. I did everything. I did general surgery. I went in the navy as a lieutenant junior grade. I was in the navy a week when I became a lieutenant senior grade. And in January of '42, they made a rule that changed the date of rank for everybody, and I was caught in it. So I stayed a lieutenant senior grade for eighteen, nineteen months. Everybody else was getting promoted, but I was never promoted because I missed, by this change of date of rank. But then finally, that's another story.

So I was there, and I was in charge of the clinic there. We had a clinic and hospital for the enlisted personnel. We also had a hospital for Samoans, we treated them both.

LaBerge: Did you have people who had been injured, or was it--

Kay: Just regular medicine, we had enlisted personnel of 3,500 people. And then about five miles away, the navy came in and put up what they called a Mobile 3 Hospital, which took care of all the injuries that came through that way. That was the story of American Samoa.

The first twelve months, we were very busy, because the war was going on, and then Tarawa took place. We were a staging area for Tarawa; they did training there. They used to bring in every six weeks marines--[telephone interruption]--they were training marines for jungle fighting down there. They used to bring in about 6,000 marines every three weeks, and then ship them out. And then they came and changed everything to have it for Tarawa, for experience.

Tropical Diseases and American Diseases

Kay: After Tarawa, it was like shutting off water, because we got a ship a day, and nothing else was happening. At that time, we decided--it was called filariasis, which was a disease of the natives--you know, our word for it was mu-mu. The mu-mu was the native word for it. They had this elephantiasis, that's what I'm thinking of, it caused elephantiasis. So we had nothing to do, so we started studying it. There were 14,000 natives there, I guess we examined 13,000, and did a lot of studies on it. They were all sent to Washington, and of course, nobody got credit for it, except the navy.

During the time we were there, the natives--the mosquitoes bit at night, sundown, sunset. A lot of the personnel would go out into what we called the bush, and got these bumps, had lymphatic involvement from the thing. People in Washington decided that anybody that had that had to go home. We, of course, down there just felt there were some rules to be involved, but we hadn't followed Washington rules. We never found any military personnel having elephantiasis. We found that if you've been exposed to mosquitoes at least forty-five years, then you might get elephantiasis, but they had the filariasis, very common amongst them.



In the navy, American Samoa, 1942. Harold Kay is pictured second from left.

LaBerge: Did you find a cure for the filariasis?

Kay: Staying away from the mosquitoes. And while I was down there, the penicillin became available, and it was a godsend down there to have it. I think that was one of the best things that ever happened to us down there. It took care of a lot of the diseases and things. There was another disease called yaws amongst the natives; we never got it. We started treating them with penicillin and clearing them right up. It was caused by a spirochete similar to syphilis. As a result of that, there was no syphilis in the natives in Samoa, because they all had yaws, they had the other spirochete. And when we cleared it up with penicillin, it was fine.

The other interesting thing, I was the--what do you call it--not immigration, but checking the ships coming in and out, for the health, the quarantine officer. Because before I got there, a ship came from Hawaii, which was a ten-day trip, and they arrived there and they got chicken pox down there. Killed off about seventy-five natives, and of course, we got all excited.

Quarantine Officer

LaBerge: Was it Americans who brought the chicken pox in?

Kay: Yes. And Americans brought in gonorrhea, but fortunately by the time they got there, we were able to treat that. The other interesting thing, I thought, was that I could go on all the ships--I used to go out in a little boat, the pilot boat, and meet them outside and get two things. First of all, get the clearance; second of all, make deals for fresh vegetables on the ship. We didn't have any. But only one country would not let us board their ship, and that was Russia. So I had--I'm trying to think what the name of it was. Anyway, I had the right to put everybody in quarantine unless I okayed it, so I, of course, put the Russian ship in quarantine. They only stayed there--I guess we had about five Russian ships in and out in eighteen months. And they weren't very good. The British were very good.

Then most of the war ships that had been damaged in the South Pacific came to Samoa and stayed overnight, then went on to Hawaii. We saw an awful lot of damaged ships. One ship, I'm trying to think of the name, had some thirty-five dead sailors on board that they couldn't get to. They were going back to Hawaii.

LaBerge: Did you have the USO or some kind of entertainment ever, or--?

Kay: We did occasionally, when they came to entertain at the Mobile Hospital, which was several miles away. Mrs. [Eleanor] Roosevelt came and visited, and she wanted to go into a certain ward. They wouldn't let her go, because that was where they had the gonorrhea. She was determined to find out why she couldn't go in there. But she was the only visitor from the States. They had a couple of USO shows out there.

We had the Red Cross. The Red Cross became a problem to us. We had a man down there, and the Red Cross provided him with a car, and everything he needed--food, candy. He kept the candy to give to the natives, because he became involved with some natives, which was quite a problem there. See, we had 3,600 men; we had about fifteen officers at the naval station; we had five navy nurses. I was involved in protecting the navy nurses, so they could not go out after nine o'clock at night until six o'clock in the morning. I didn't use marines as guarding them, but I used what we called fita-fita guards, which was a navy--mostly Samoans. They had, as far as I was concerned, they had the mentality of about a twelve-year-old. You tell them to do something, and they would follow through. So I put guards around the navy nurses' quarters, and informed nobody goes in, nobody goes out. And nobody went in, nobody went out, without permission. See, what else was there?

LaBerge: So only the navy nurses had a curfew?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: And the guys didn't?

Kay: Only the navy nurses, because as you can imagine, five white nurses with 3,600 at the station--there were about 36,000 marines on the island--there was a commandant, special commandant, for the marines. The navy who controlled American Samoa--the governor was the navy captain, the attorney general was a navy man, the health officer was a navy man, who was me--every official in the Samoan government was navy, navy-controlled. We all had two positions.

Samoan Economy

LaBerge: How do you think our presence there either changed or influenced American Samoa for--

Kay: It changed completely; it helped them out. Today, it's very-- they're on their own. I went back a few years ago for the first time, and I couldn't believe the changes, because everything that I had seen before was gone. They have two big sardine factories there, which weren't there before.

Incidentally, during the war, there was this Catholic school for the natives out in one of the towns there.

LaBerge: So before that, what was the economy based on?

Kay: Very bad. They--

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LaBerge: You were saying the economy was based on the naval station.

Kay: Naval station, and a root called taro and some oils that they got from taro. But the highest-paid people were the navy people. They were paid at about a seaman first class, which was about \$50 a month.

LaBerge: Were these Samoans?

Kay: Samoans, all Samoans. They had beautiful outfits, and when the cruise ships used to come in before the war, these people put on dances and uniforms and all this. Of course, during the war, there were no cruise ships. They were the guards we used. We didn't trust the marines.

LaBerge: Why didn't you trust the marines?

Kay: They sometimes didn't follow orders.

Living Quarters and Climate

Kay: We were down there in the heat and so forth--you see, it rained-- we had 200 inches of rain a year. The humidity was 85 and the temperature was 85. My first experience, I was there one day, and brought a raincoat and put it on. It was raining for half an hour, and so about the first shower there, I was wetter inside than outside. So I no longer wore--. We used to let the rain rain, and dry out right away.

Used to go to mess, we'd have to take off our shoes, our boots and our socks and roll up our pants, because there'd be two

feet of water. It's unbelievable, but we survived it. We lived five officers to a house, right on the water. We had a native who came and did all of our laundry, kept up the house. She-- there were three doctors, a dentist, and a chaplain. So she used to ask us medical questions, and we found out that she was treating the natives out in the bush. She'd ask us questions.

I don't know whether this is interesting, but we had nothing to do, but we had a rule that whoever took a shower every night, whoever got through first had to fix the drinks. We had a Baptist minister, and we always saw that he was the first one to get the drinks. Two drinks at home before dinner was the limit, so if we had over two drinks, we didn't go to dinner. We'd stay home and drink some more. [laughter]

While down in Samoa, the word came out that all doctors were to remove all signs of being a doctor. All officers would take off their ranks. Doctors were to be trained how to use small arms, so the Japanese wouldn't know what they were doing. So we used to go out and practice shooting. We all had to have at our bedside at all times our sidearm and canteen of water. We had two of them; I had one filled with whiskey. Because we had "connections." [laughter]

LaBerge: I bet you became very close.

Kay: Very close, very close. The only ones I know that's living still, one that's a pediatrician in Los Angeles, and I've seen him; one who's an eye doctor from back East, I never see him; one was a dentist that's living up in Vallejo. I don't know where the others went. That would be interesting to record that.

This is just a sideline, mainly for you. This doctor, the doctor in San Francisco where I had gone for treatment was there--

LaBerge: What was his name?

Kay: Duggan, in San Francisco. He had become very friendly with the padre, the captain in the marines. So he used to come over, and we had many discussions with the Baptist, padre, and myself regarding religion, which of course is taboo in the navy and women, but we'd stay up, go way into the morning hours. It would be very interesting. Because the Baptists don't believe in any alcohol at all, and we'd sit there and drink and have the discussion. That's just a little sideline.

Tarawa

Kay: The most horrible thing was Tarawa. At least, we gave a party for the doctors who were going.

LaBerge: Tell me, what was Tarawa?

Kay: Tarawa was an island in the middle of the Pacific the Japanese had, and it was very vital for our communication between there and China. It was well fortified, and they expected to take it immediately, in a day. It took three weeks to take it. Some people with us had been trained to go in after the combat troops had taken it, but it got so bad at Tarawa that they had to go in. Any of the doctors that were there that night were all killed. Sad news when we heard about it. Including a classmate of mine from Berkeley.

LaBerge: So then the U.S. did take it?

Kay: Did take it. It was an awful thing.

LaBerge: What year was that?

Kay: Forty-three. December of '43, because I went--a couple of times, on an inspection trip in the area. I had a chance to go to Tarawa unofficially. There had been an order to take no trips unofficially, but these pilots were leaving and Tarawa was about 150 miles from there. They were going to spend Christmas Eve in there. I had nothing to do, so they said, "Do you want to take a ride?" I said, "Sure."

We got there Christmas Eve, and the Japs came back up. Fortunately, there was a safe place underground. Because see, I could never say I was under fire, because I wasn't supposed to be there! [laughs]

LaBerge: How about your mail back and forth? Was it censored?

Kay: It was censored, everything. That coming to us wasn't censored, but everything going out was censored. When I came home, I saw many of my letters had been cut. I could never tell my wife where I was; I could tell her what I was doing, but could never tell her where I was. They censored that out, along with everything else. The censoring was being done right there, before it left the port.

One night, we got a call, and they had five Japanese prisoners. They were bringing them in there to stay overnight

before they went on to Hawaii. They had a doctor, and maybe he would talk to me. I went down there to see the captive, and he wouldn't say a word. I asked him questions, and he wouldn't say a word. I think they were about the only five captives they had; usually, the Japs would kill us and we'd kill them when we captured them, bang, bang, bang. So we didn't take many prisoners. They shot us, and we shot them. That was one of the tales of World War II which was bad. They marched them off and the marines would sit there and shoot at them. That's enough for Samoa.

Back to Mare Island, 1944

LaBerge: So when were you sent back to the United States?

Kay: About the middle of '44. I was sent back to Mare Island, where we did nothing but urology.

LaBerge: Did you have to put in a plea to be at Mare Island?

Kay: No. I found out in the navy, your number one choice you never got; your number two choice, maybe; your number three, always was. So I put Mare Island as number three.

LaBerge: Weren't you smart! What did you put for number one and two?

Kay: One, the hospital ship, and I wanted the hospital you know. I got my hospital ship, and by then I was in Mare Island until the war was over, in the middle of October. In September, you had to have so many points to get out, and I was short about ten points. I had to stay in for a while.

Then in October--

LaBerge: This is '45?

Kay: Forty-five. October, my wife was pregnant with the second child. In October of '45, we got word that I was being transferred to the hospital ship. But I had two weeks leave. So at the end of two weeks, I went down to San Francisco and reported in. The girl there said--you see, the war was over--"Do you really want to go?" So I said "No," and she said, "Step over there." So I was out.

The hospital ship I was supposed to meet came in the day after I was released. If I hadn't gone that day, I would have

been on this hospital ship, went to the peace treaty signing in-- where was it, Japan--I would have been over there. Fortunately. So I was out of active duty. We were living in Vallejo.

LaBerge: Where was your wife living while you were in Samoa?

Kay: She was down with her family in Los Angeles with the baby.

Trip Home by Air

LaBerge: You did a lot of moving around then, didn't you?

Kay: Yes. And on leaving Samoa, all the people I had gone with were going first. They all left on the ship on a Tuesday morning, and I remember I had said goodbye to them. Wednesday morning, my orders came in, first available transportation, either air or sea. So I took air.

Came back, and couldn't make any calls, so I arrived in San Francisco and called my wife, and she came up the next day. She said, "I'll be there tomorrow," forgetting that transportation was hard. Our reunion was held in a Pullman car in San Jose. I went down to San Jose and got her. She went on the Lark. And my son would have nothing to do with me, for the first couple of months. I was a stranger, and I spoiled their whole life. Because he had been down there, and he was living with her mother and father, sister. All those people are important to a child. I spoiled it, and he wouldn't have anything to do with me. Took two months before he would come to me. And it's been fine ever since.

LaBerge: I guess I've heard other people say the same thing, that it was a real hard transition afterwards.

Kay: Hard for them. I came back to Mare Island, and I was there when the war ended. The navy life is different than life that we knew. We worked during the day, and then had the cocktail hour. I am convinced that I drank more liquor than I did the rest of my life.

Down in Samoa, we had to each have our drinks every night. I'd saved up a case of scotch and a case of bourbon which couldn't get here until the ship had. Finally got somebody on one of the ships to bring it back. In my trip back from Samoa, I knew when the ship was coming, so I went down. I'd seen the people all off. I came and met them all when they got off the

ship. [laughter] They looked at me, and said how the hell did I do that? But I was there.

In the navy, you go by rank. I was the medical officer for the area with two stripes. Mobile 3 had a regular navy captain with four stripes, but he was under me. That aggravated him no end, how could a two-stripe be in charge. I was trying to be as nice as I could, but he got very upset with me. He wouldn't talk to me, so I got an order for some doctors who were needed someplace else, so I assigned all his doctors over that were under him. He became quite friendly, as you can imagine.

So the day that I left Samoa, he was going, too. He was going down to New Zealand, and I was going--I didn't know about it--I was going to New Zealand, had a chance to be on that plane. I could go down there first before I went home, check out New Zealand. The transportation officer said, "You know, Captain So-and-So is going to be on that plane." I said, "Thank you. I'll go back to Hawaii." Took us two days to go from Samoa by air to Hawaii.

LaBerge: So you never went to New Zealand?

Kay: No. And then Hawaii--it was twelve hours by air, twelve hours. I slept on the mail sacks, it was a mail plane.

Boy, talking about Red Cross, this guy down there did all these natives, gave them candy and everything, and then he got sick. He had to come in to the clinic in to me, and I told him I needed some special candy--he had a cirrhosis and needed sugar. So I got plenty of candy, and when I had previously asked for candy, he never had it. So I got a lot of it after he was sick. So I said, "Okay, finally take this, and you're going to be shipped back to the States tomorrow." He said, "You can't do that." So he went.

Building Hospital on Samoa and Sailing

Kay: While in Samoa, after the marines had left, they all moved out, and they left a lot of stuff behind, and we found it. I built a new hospital there for the base, built a thirty-five-bed hospital. I thought it was pretty good, well designed. When I went back now, it was gone. But at that time, we used it. It was quite a hospital, thirty-five beds. I had a lot of fun with planning that, I planned it the way I wanted to.

LaBerge: And what would you do to get--?

Kay: There was enough equipment on the island that the marines had left, that we were able to do this. Everything brand new.

LaBerge: And you just got regular navy guys to build it?

Kay: Yes. They had a battalion down there of seabees, assigned to the station, and they did it. For recreation, I learned how to sail a ship, sail a yacht. See, when the war broke, all the navy had to be out of sight. They sunk them all. After Tarawa, we had nothing to do. We had some kind of divers that went down and brought them up. So I got hold of a forty-foot sailboat and had it all fixed up. I was planning to ship it home, but when I got out, I left it there.

LaBerge: Have you sailed since you've been back here?

Kay: Yes. We sailed down there. I learned how to sail, learned how to do all that. That last six months was sort of like recreation, we had nothing to do. Except every week, a tanker of oil came in, because we could assign their gas, that's where they unloaded, to be shipped down further. I don't know how many millions of gallons of gas were left there. Because somebody in Washington forgot to shut off the supply, and we just came and put it out in the boondocks. I've often wondered what happened to it.

We had an air station, air field--five airplanes could take off at the same time. This was how important it was. That's where a lot of navy planes came and landed. I don't think people here realize how important American Samoa was.

LaBerge: I'm sure they don't.

Kay: Because it was really the only post we had. The nicest ships that came in were the British. They would have us aboard for rum. We had them all--French, Italians--not Russians. All of our Allies were there. British, French, Russian. I used to go out and quarantine--now, that's what, I was the quarantine officer.

LaBerge: Okay, that was the name of it.

Kay: I went out on board with the pilot just like--

LaBerge: In the movies?

Kay: Have you ever been on a cruise ship?

LaBerge: Yes.

Kay: Well, the pilot boat goes to the ship to bring it in. That became quite an experience. I always went to the mess officer to see what vegetables--we had no fresh vegetables, no fresh fruit. We had bananas, and papayas. But no milk. There would be a deal, we could make it. It was very interesting. I learned that the navy is run by its petty officers, warrant officers, not by the officers. That was my experience in the navy.

Naval Reserves for Twenty-eight Years

LaBerge: Well then, since we're talking about the navy, you stayed in the navy as a reserve officer.

Kay: Stayed in as a reserve officer. I was in for a total of twenty-eight years. In the navy, we had made arrangements to have a unit stationed at Peralta Hospital, so we met there. We would meet there thirty-five times a year to get credit. We had a meeting from twelve to two once a week. Then we had a unit at Alta Bates, and then when the Korean War came, they took a lot of our officers away. By now, I was a captain in the navy. My advancement came very quickly. I was lieutenant commander senior grade, then I became a commander in six months, and then became a captain. In other words, I caught up--

LaBerge: With where you should have been?

Kay: Yes. In the navy, they put up what they call "all nav promotion," and they took a whole group of people up from one date to another, and they advanced them one rank. I was never in that. But I always got my promotions by appointments. In other words, I was named in every promotion.

LaBerge: What was the other thing called, where the whole group--?

Kay: All navs. All nav.

LaBerge: So then when you retired, were you still a captain?

Kay: Yes. I retired after twenty-eight years of duty. First of all, you don't get paid after twenty-six years. And secondly, they were making one naval captain an admiral each year, and I was up for admiral in about 300 years.

LaBerge: In 300 years? Oh, well why--[laughs]

Kay: So I dropped it. The last two years in the navy, in this unit, I was the commanding officer, and I went back to Great Lakes Training Station for a week. They gave us a course back there on how to use nuclear weapons--and I had a week there. We lived in the bachelor's quarters. The second floor was reserved for women officers. We never stopped at the second floor. That was new to us, because in our day, bachelor's quarters were for men only. Women lived on the second floor and we lived on the third and fourth floor. Again, I am sorry, but I sleepwalk. So that's the navy career.

LaBerge: That's been an interesting experience.

Kay: Anybody that gets into the navy, if they possibly can, should stay in the reserves. It's very useful now.

LaBerge: Because you get a retirement pension?

Kay: Yes, it's very nice.

LaBerge: And that wasn't too bad, to have a meeting once a week?

Kay: In the army, you had to go away for two weeks.

LaBerge: Yes, in the summer or something.

Kay: In the navy, you did, too. But not while we had units. One in Oakland at Peralta, and the other one that was Alta Bates.

LaBerge: Doesn't the air force reserve--don't they have to go away too for two weeks?

Kay: Yes, all of them do. But this was a special--.

LaBerge: A special deal.

Kay: So I still had a little contact in Washington.

LaBerge: I see.

Kay: His name is Nimitz.

LaBerge: Oh, that's right! He's the one you used to walk to class with.

Kay: Every day.

LaBerge: That came in very handy, very handy.

Kay: He never made arrangements for the medical units but his assistant warrant officer could do it. After being in the navy, you learn how.

Oak Knoll Naval Hospital, 1960

Kay: Then about that time the navy came out and they wanted to close Oak Knoll, and move everything to San Francisco. I met with them. I met with a group that came out for everything in Alameda County. But the interesting thing was, there was a captain in the hospital corps, not a doctor. He had been my petty officer, chief petty officer, when I was in San Francisco, and doing naval recruiting. Now he was a captain in the hospital corps, which was very interesting. He was with this group that got stationed here. Kind of old time--hadn't seen him all during the war, or since the beginning of the war. Interesting. Spent three days arguing.

LaBerge: Whether Oak Knoll should stay open or not?

Kay: Kept Oak Knoll open. Explaining to them how it worked for us and how important it was to all the area. Now I see they've closed it.

Before Oak Knoll was opened, there was one pathologist at Mare Island, and he didn't go overseas. He was transferred to Oak Knoll as a first officer there, and he had a little shed out on the golf course that was then at Oak Knoll. Two officers assigned. So I saw Oak Knoll from the beginning. It used to be a beautiful golf course. People don't realize that. The officer's club there was the clubhouse.

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LaBerge: I think we've finished World War II and the navy.

Kay: I think we have.

LaBerge: Unless you think of anything else there. How about, then, getting back to regular life and the birth of your second son?

Kay: The birth of my second son took place in Vallejo, in December of '45.

LaBerge: And his name is?

Kay: Robert. He's a doctor.

LaBerge: He's in Cleveland, is that right?

Kay: Cleveland, Ohio, at the Cleveland Clinic.

III POSTWAR PRACTICE IN UROLOGY

Finding Housing and Opening Practice

LaBerge: Did you stay in Vallejo?

Kay: No, we moved around. We wanted to go to Berkeley and find a place.

LaBerge: Was it difficult to find housing?

Kay: Very difficult, yes. We found a place in Piedmont to rent. Because after all, I didn't have any money. I did have whatever severance pay. We lived there for two years. I opened a practice, and Dr. Meads who did my residency and let me use his office two days a week, which started me off, he helped me.

LaBerge: What had you done with all your equipment when you closed your office when the war started?

Kay: I gave it away, so that I didn't have too much equipment. I gave it to this Dr. Meads, he took my stuff. He was an older man. A fine teacher. I came back, and worked in my office and three weeks after I was in practice, I developed dizziness, just in three weeks. Have you ever heard of Meuniera's disease?

LaBerge: I've heard of it. I can probably find it in the dictionary.

Kay: You're dizzy, and can't stand.

LaBerge: Was it a result of being overseas, or--?

Kay: I don't know what it was. It was a great thing to have happen when you had your office open three weeks. So when I got over that, then I opened my practice again in Dr. Meads' office.

LaBerge: Where was the office?

Kay: On Grand Avenue. Then I was there for about six months, and then moved onto the hill.

LaBerge: So you were really starting from scratch.

Kay: Yes. In '44, Dr. Meads had been very active in the Western Section of the American Urological Association, he'd been president. During his presidency, I became a member of the Western Section of the association.

LaBerge: Was it a prestigious thing, like did you have to be invited?

Kay: You did then, but not now. Let's see, what else. That was the beginning of some of my interests in politics. I joined the Alameda County Medical Association in '37. At that time, it was Alameda County, not Contra Costa. That came later. So I joined that in '37, before the war. In fact, the last six months before I went to Edinburgh. And then, I practiced again in '45.

Postwar Reception from the Hospitals

Kay: The interesting thing was, which I'll never forget, is I came down to the hospital after I was discharged, and didn't have any civilian clothes. It was military uniforms. And they said, "So glad to see you. How are you getting along? When are you getting out?" I said, "I'm out." "Oh." I really had a cold reception, never had a good welcome. It was fine, as long as I was not going to be bothering anyone in practice.

LaBerge: But that you were coming, and you were going to be a rival, or something?

Kay: I guess so. Very interesting. I came back, and I went to the hospitals that I had been associated with before. The only hospital that really took me was Peralta. They said, "Give us your phone number and address, and you're on the staff." The other hospitals, I had to reapply.

LaBerge: Really. I am so surprised. I would think that anyone who had served their country would have been welcomed back.

Kay: It was a very interesting episode to find that out. I had to make application to the other hospitals.

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LaBerge: The last time, we ended with you coming back to Oakland after the war, and you were telling me about rejoining the medical staffs, and how you weren't really welcomed with open arms.

Kay: Except for one.

LaBerge: Peralta?

Kay: Peralta. That's the only one. I had to reapply to all the others, and had to go through all the rigmarole of getting on them.

LaBerge: What kind of rigmarole is there?

Kay: You have to make an application, and then they decide whether they want you on or not.

LaBerge: Can they decide no without cause?

Kay: Yes, in those days they could. One hospital in particular said no because of my religion.

LaBerge: You're kidding! Which hospital?

Kay: Samuel Merritt.

LaBerge: You are kidding! Did you ever join later?

Kay: Yes, I did. I joined later, and became an active staff member. But originally, that was the case.

LaBerge: I can't even believe that.

Kay: Nobody can today, but it's true. The same reason I couldn't ever join the Claremont Country Club.

LaBerge: Did you make an application?

Kay: No. Now they take Jewish members--now you can join. Couldn't join then. It was interesting.

###

Kay: I got involved in Berkeley at Herrick, and was president of the staff for about a year. I quit. Had a run-in with their management.

LaBerge: Why did you decide to be president in the first place?

Kay: They asked me.

LaBerge: They asked you and--

Alta Bates Hospital History

Kay: And I took it. I think one of the reasons was I was from Berkeley originally. Although they were a little upset because my father had saved Alta Bates--nobody knows about that. But Alta Bates almost went broke in '31 or '32, and my father, being a merchant in Berkeley, got all of the creditors together and said, "Look, let's keep this open." Alta Bates was a very small little place. Alta Bates was there, the woman.

LaBerge: Oh, she was?

Kay: Oh, yes, I knew her very well. Creditors took [commercial] paper for the future, and that's why Alta Bates is there today. My father was the man behind it. But you'll never find his name anyplace. My father served on the board for many years, he was treasurer for many years. He was not given, at the end of his life, the recognition he deserved. We were told that, "If you give us \$7,500, we'll have a picture of him." I said, "You've got to be kidding." That I'll never forget. I've never quite gotten over this.

LaBerge: For doing that. Was the hospital where it is now?

Kay: Yes. There used to be an old house and Alta Bates had the wing of the old house--the first part of the house that was built is gone now. They redid it, but it's all on the same spot. Where the south edge of the hospital is, that's where she was. She had a nursing school there. I think people have forgotten about that.

LaBerge: Is that how it started, the nursing school was first?

Kay: Well, the hospital was first, and then she had a nursing school. She was a nurse-anesthetist. She was interesting. She was never married. She adopted a boy, Charles Bates. They often wondered how she never married and had a boy. I knew him very well. That was Alta Bates.

LaBerge: Did they name the hospital after her because she contributed, or because--

Kay: It was originally named after her; the Alta Bates Nursing Home. And hospital.

[Interview 3: February 3, 1994]##

Kay: Alta Bates Hospital started as a--Miss Alta Bates had a little small house, and started taking patients, I forgot the exact date. And then she had a nursing school attached to it, because she loved to teach. She gave anesthetics--she was an anesthetist. She was never married; adopted a son and a daughter, and raised them. I don't know what's happened to them.

LaBerge: Is their last name Bates?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: So it was well established, though, by the time you--

Kay: Oh, yes. By the time I came along, they already had the big building, and it's now been torn down and replaced by this present building. I became active there at the same time I became active at Herrick. But Alta Bates was there until she died, giving anesthetics.

LaBerge: Was the hospital named after her because she was so active, or did she help raise the funds?

Kay: Because she was active. She started it--it was Alta Bates Rest Home or something in the beginning, and they kept the name. From '31 to '35, they almost went into bankruptcy, and I think I told you the story of my father, went to other merchants and said to them, "Let's take paper instead of money to keep them open." And that's what they did.

LaBerge: You did tell me. While we're talking about the hospitals, is there a different philosophy at the different hospitals you were--because you really went to a lot, when I look at this list.

Kay: Well, there wasn't too much--Herrick, of course, was a different type of hospital at the time. It took everybody, and standards were high, but not as high as the others. Alta Bates was very high.

Teaching Medicine**Establishing Residency Program in Urology at Highland Hospital**

Kay: Well, you had to have good standing in your profession. That's what I mean. Recognized well by your associates. Peralta, Providence, and Merritt were top-grade. I was president of Highland Hospital medical staff, which was the county hospital. I worked out there some twenty-five years, started a residency program at Highland in urology, which went on for about twenty years. It was stopped because of some rulings. But there are about eight urologists in the area who were trained there.

LaBerge: How would you go about starting a residency program?

Kay: You had to get approval from the American Board of Urology. When they gave your approval, you had to get your program together, how many years you were going to do this, this, and this. How much clinical work, how much practical work, how much research, how much anatomy. And when you got all that together, then you presented it to the American Board of Urology, who accepted or didn't accept it. And they accepted it.

At that time, Highland had a lot of residencies, which I don't think they have now. They had several departments.

LaBerge: So how many other doctors did you need on the staff to do that? Just to do the urology residency?

Kay: We had nine.

LaBerge: Because when you started, you were one of the few urologists, isn't that right?

Kay: When I first started in practice, I was one of seven in the whole area. There are now forty-three.

LaBerge: That's still not a big number, is it?

Kay: No.

Providence Hospital Nurses and UCSF

LaBerge: You also taught at Providence Hospital?

Kay: Taught nurses at Providence Hospital for about ten years. Taught them about urology.

LaBerge: And what else--UCSF?

Kay: For three years, when I first started, I went over and taught as a--I don't know what they call them, assistant something. Because of the traffic, I quit.

LaBerge: Were you teaching nurses there, or medical students?

Kay: Medical students and fellows, residents.

LaBerge: Did you like that part of your career, of teaching?

Kay: Very much so.

LaBerge: So when it says that you interned at Alameda County Hospitals, it didn't mean Highland?

Kay: Yes, that's Highland.

LaBerge: Just Highland, okay.

Kay: That's it. Well, Highland and Fairmount were the two of them together. As an intern, you spent three months out at Fairmount, and nine months at Highland. When you're a resident, you spent all the time at Highland. While at Highland, I had served in the emergency department under "Brick Muller," who was an alumnus of California. I don't know whether you know the name or not.

LaBerge: No, I don't.

Kay: He was a famous end for the University of California football team, I think their first All-American for the University of California.

LaBerge: Do you know about what year that he was--?

Kay: He was in '21 or '22.

HAROLD KAY

"The highest honor that any organization, be it political, professional or what not, can bestow on a member, is to elevate that individual to its presidency—its position of leadership and trust. Like all those who believe that honors should be deserved, not merely bestowed, I rejoice in the choice of Dr. Harold Kay as President of the Alameda-Contra Costa Medical Association for the coming year.

For some twenty-five years, Harold has been active in the affairs of this medical society, in its component hospitals and committees and in the community served by this organization. The positions of trust and honor that he has held are almost numberless but the unrecognized contributions that he has made are even greater. Harold is one of those rare birds—a worker with limitless energy and interest. His greatest preoccupations concern the good of the profession and the lay public. It can not be denied—he is an unselfish leader. Even within his own profession, his horizon is not limited by the boundaries of his specialty—consider his activities in the "K.O. Polio campaign"—a disease far removed from his chosen field of urology.

While Harold was born in Omaha, Nebraska, he is practically a native son. His family moved here in 1912, when our new prexy was a mere three years of age. Since then, they have maintained their residence in Berkeley. The future president attended such local institutions of learn-

1912



1915



1919



1924

Doctor of Medicine

ing as Washington Grammar School, Garfield Junior High School and Berkeley High School from whence he graduated in 1926. He then went across the street to the University of California from which institution he graduated in 1931. In college he was busy with activities, being on the Rally Committee for two years and attaining the chairmanship of the Junior Day Committee and the Reception Committee and being a member of the Senior Week Executive Committee.

His medical training was started at Creighton University but he transferred back to the University of California and graduated with his coveted M.D. degree in 1936. He was an intern and then a resident at Highland-Alameda County Hospital followed by a period of training in Dr. Albert Mead's office. This was succeeded by an interlude of graduate training in Scotland and the entrance into his own private practice in downtown Oakland in 1938. Since then, he has confined his practice to urology in this city except for a hiatus in the Navy from 1942 to 1945. After his discharge from the service, he was not willing to let bygones be bygones so he continued in the active reserve retiring last year with the rank of captain. He passed his examinations for the American Board of Urology in 1949. He is a great joiner being a member of more organizations than this reporter can remember. However, to name a few—Harold is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons and the International College

1962



1944



1929



1938

IV ACTIVITIES IN VARIOUS MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Alameda County Medical Association and Kaiser Doctors

LaBerge: Okay, I can look it up. When you decided to go into urology in the first place, how did you decide, for instance, to go into solo practice rather than joining Kaiser or joining a group?

Kay: We didn't have groups. I didn't join Kaiser, you'll see in there, Kaiser was not well accepted. During my presidency, I got Kaiser members to join the association. That was quite a thing, and I got a very nice letter in there [pointing to scrapbook] from Kaiser talking about how nice I was.

LaBerge: Join the urological association, or join which?

Kay: County Medical.

LaBerge: Oh, they weren't members of the County Medical?

Kay: They wouldn't elect them. I became president and made some decisions.

LaBerge: That sounds almost like the way we used to think of osteopaths.

Kay: Of course, we thought of osteopaths that way until--I'm trying to think when it was; I was in the House of Delegates of the California Medical Association when we decided to give them their M.D.s and accept them. Then I had the job of deciding who in Alameda County should become an M.D. All the osteopaths here but one got their M.D. immediately. One person jumped the gun, said he was an M.D. about three months before we accepted them, so we postponed him for many years. That's a little issue, as president of the ACCMA.

When I joined the County Medical, it was only Alameda County Medical then. Years later, we joined with Contra Costa County. Let's see, what else? We used to have monthly meetings of the

County Medical where you discussed cases, where you discussed practice of medicine. But the association got so big that they only have an annual meeting [now], and discuss nothing medical, just social, and all of the business of the association is taken care of by committee.

LaBerge: Are you required to join?

Kay: You were then. You're not now, but you were required then to join hospital staffs, and you had to be a member of the County Medical.

LaBerge: I was wondering if it was something like the California Bar, that you have to be a member.

Kay: No. But the hospitals wouldn't accept you. I don't know whether they do now. You had to have County Medical membership. And if you belonged to the County, you didn't necessarily belong to the State, but eventually it became if you belonged to the County, you had to belong to the State Medical.

LaBerge: How did you get involved sort of in politics in these different associations? What motivated you to do that?

Kay: I don't know. Well, I think actually--I shouldn't say that one of the motivations was because of my religion, but no member of my religion had been active in any of these organizations. I just wanted to prove that we were no different than the rest. I guess that was the beginning of it. See, I was the first Jewish president of all these things, first one in the state offices--no, I wasn't the first in the state offices; I was the second one.

California Medical Association

Kay: But once I got started, the County Medical, if you were on the board of the County Medical, you automatically became a member of the House of Delegates of the State Association.

LaBerge: Which is called the California Medical Association?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: Okay, I'm looking at these dates here. What did the House of Delegates do?

Kay: They're the ones, the governing body, of the state, and they decide what politics and so forth. They also had a section of scientific, so that at all the conventions, there was always a scientific meeting associated with it. New cases, new ideas, new drugs, new everything, were presented.

LaBerge: Did the California Medical Association have an ethics review board or something like that, too?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: So were you involved in that?

Kay: When I was chairman of the council, I was. Not until then.

LaBerge: So would you be involved in setting up the programs, and--?

Kay: Yes. It was interesting. In the California Medical Association, you have the House of Delegates, and then you have your officers. The president is the selected--the president of the California Medical Association is sort of the titular head. He does public relations. The council, which is about fifteen members, had a chairman, and they ran the business part, ran everything in the California Medical Association.

LaBerge: And you were chairman in 1968?

Kay: Yes, to '71.

LaBerge: Until 1971?

Kay: Yes, '68 to '71. I was vice chairman a few years before.

LaBerge: So you actually ran the business of the--?

Kay: Yes. What we were going to do and when we were going to do it, and set up the programs, set up the meetings. We had a meeting, an annual meeting, and special meetings. The council would meet every month.

LaBerge: And then the whole association would meet once a year?

Kay: Right.

LaBerge: That's a lot of meetings--that's a lot of time that you invested in that.

Kay: I usually would go on Friday and Saturday.

LaBerge: Where would they be held?

Kay: Either up here in the north, or in Los Angeles.

LaBerge: So San Francisco?

Kay: San Francisco or Los Angeles.

LaBerge: So the county and the state ones were kind of interrelated in some way?

Kay: Very well, very much so, yes.

American Medical Association

LaBerge: And what about the AMA [American Medical Association]?

Kay: The AMA is--the California Medical Association had so many delegates going to AMA, and I became a--

LaBerge: It says alternate delegate.

Kay: --alternate delegate from the California Medical Association to the AMA. And the AMA you know about I'm sure.

LaBerge: Yes.

Kay: It's the medical body of the United States. Used to have a big membership; practically every doctor. Today they don't have all of them. There are all kinds of suborganizations--American College of Surgeons, American College of This and American College of That. But the AMA is still the top one. I became a delegate, I forgot when.

LaBerge: It says 1964.

Kay: I became a delegate.

LaBerge: Or alternate delegate.

Kay: And then the delegate, I guess, was the last four years I was there.

LaBerge: What kinds of issues came up in those years that--?

Kay: Well, during that '64 time came up Medicare and we were very opposed to it. We took up different items, laws--[interruption] Resolutions about how to handle this problem or that problem--smoking, education, schools, medical schools, new cases--it was a combination of everything.

LaBerge: Was one of the issues Medi-Cal or Medicaid?

Kay: No. Not when I was in there. That came later. I guess that came towards the end.

American Board of Urology

LaBerge: While you were belonging to those groups, were you also a member of the American Board of Urology and--?

Kay: I was on the American Board; I became a member of it by taking an examination in '47, I think it was. That was an experience. You had to have fifty cases, twenty-five major and twenty-five minor, write up the history, present it to them, and then you went back to Chicago for an oral examination, and then they decided whether to make you a member of the American Board.

LaBerge: So this was after the war?

Kay: After the war, '47. I had all these cases typed up, had them review them, dictated them to somebody. And then went back, and spent three days in Chicago. One day was spent in pathology examination, one day in oral examination, and one day just getting out of there.

LaBerge: Did you find out right away whether you passed or not?

Kay: Yes. Well, they didn't say you passed, but anybody that was on the borderline was called back for a second examination, so you automatically knew.

LaBerge: You didn't have to do this in order to practice, right?

Kay: No, I could practice without that, but that helped my identifying myself as a urologist. If you don't have your board, you have trouble getting positions at hospitals, Medicare patients etc.

American and International College of Surgeons

LaBerge: What about the American College of Surgeons and the International College of Surgeons? Is that the same kind of thing?

Kay: No, two different things, joined the American College--became a fellow of the American College of Surgeons. I became a fellow [looking at wall] it's right here.

LaBerge: Okay, 1947.

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: So did you have to make application--?

Kay: You make application and present why you should be a member of it, and then they accept you. American College of Surgeons was sort of an adjunct to the American Medical Association that specialized on people doing surgery. And in urology, you do surgery. And then, I got interested in the International College of Surgeons, if you went overseas or anything, they were connected with overseas associations. Very good thing. I was on their board for about a year.

LaBerge: Okay, because it says on here that you were the past regent.

Kay: Yes, that's the regent for this area.

LaBerge: Would you get new information from other countries, what other people were doing?

Kay: That's right, from the International College of Surgeons. Today, the American College of Surgeons has become more international, so I haven't heard much about the International College of Surgeons.

Urological Associations: Northern California, Western Section, American

LaBerge: Well, then we have these different urological--we've got Northern California Urological, Western Section, and American.

Kay: All right. Northern California Urological was established in Oakland. For about ten years, the urologists in Oakland used to meet every three months and invite people from San Francisco, and

they would invite people from Sacramento to come and join with us. Interesting thing, I guess I can say it, if a program was put on by the University of California, Stanford people didn't go. See, Stanford was in San Francisco. If Stanford put on a program, UC people didn't go. We would go to both. So we decided to have the meetings over here, we invited them. And that's when we started the Northern California Urological Society.

LaBerge: Were you one of the founding members?

Kay: I guess so, yes. And eventually I became president of that.

LaBerge: Well, it says president, 1962.

Kay: That's right. So it started about, I'd say around '58.

LaBerge: And I assume the purpose of that was to keep up on what was new?

Kay: What was happening in the area here, and what was new in the area. It is still going, and what we do there is if people bring interesting x-ray cases there, for an hour they have what they call an x-ray conference. Then they usually have an outstanding speaker, and then they have dinner. It's usually held in San Francisco. And it became very active because Stanford and California people were taking part in it, and became members of it. It was sort of bringing everybody together.

LaBerge: It sounds like you were instrumental in getting the group together, and not keeping them so separate.

Kay: We did.

LaBerge: Now, it's interesting--they didn't identify you as being part of the University of California?

Kay: No.

LaBerge: You were just from Oakland.

Kay: Oakland. Oakland was a different area.

LaBerge: Do you still go to those meetings, or not?

Kay: I haven't been--I get invited every--they meet every three months. In fact, there's one this season, which is the one in March. I don't know whether I'll go there or not. It's too much trouble to go over there. I haven't been there for a couple of years, but I used to go.

LaBerge: And what about the American Urological Association? Is that something that you join just by being a urologist, or is it--?

Kay: You can, but usually it's because you're a member of the Western Section. The Western Section is the eleven Western states. They meet once a year presenting cases, all kinds of cases, interesting cases. When I first started, it was presented by individual practitioners. The last few years it's been taken over by either southern California medical schools or San Francisco medical schools. They sort of run a scientific program.

In the Western Section, I went to the American Urological Association about the same time. I would go to the meetings of the American Urological, which are held all over the country. And then in--I forgot the date there--when I became a member of the board--

LaBerge: It doesn't say board, but it says president, 1970.

Kay: That's of the Western Section. But I became a member of the American Urological Board of Directors, I think, in '77--I don't know if it's down there.

LaBerge: It isn't down there.

Kay: I was on there just for two years, I think it was '77 to '79. I was out of practice at the time, and there were concerns about that, because I wasn't practicing medicine, wasn't practicing urology.

LaBerge: But then you were president of the Western Section in 1970.

Kay: President of Western Section, yes.

LaBerge: So what did that involve?

Kay: That involved running a convention.

LaBerge: And also keeping up correspondence and things like that?

Kay: Correspondence with different people, yes. The offices were in Los Angeles, so a lot of stuff came out of L.A. and the house office of the A.U.A. in Baltimore.

LaBerge: It sounds like you almost needed a full-time staff to keep up with all these board associations you were on.

Kay: Yes. I had a very efficient secretary here who took care of it.

LaBerge: What was her name?

Kay: Helen Gile. She was with me for twenty-three years. She worked with me for twenty-three years.

LaBerge: Because I imagine you had to write speeches and articles and--

Kay: Well, I was supposed to get help from the--what do you call him--well, the executive director. Western Section was the, I guess executive director, to help you with the California Medical Association--

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Kay: You didn't interview him, did you?

LaBerge: We were talking about Hap Hassard--I want to get this on tape. I didn't, but Malca Chall in our office has interviewed him just in the past year.

Kay: I know, because they presented it at the last class reunion. He came over. I hadn't seen him in maybe five years, and he had aged so much I didn't recognize him.

LaBerge: Was he in your class?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: What was he involved in?

Kay: He was the lawyer and then secretary of the California Medical Association. Quite a nationally known person.

LaBerge: So anyway, all those kinds of people helped you--

Kay: Helped me with the things, yes.

LaBerge: Tell me, how did you find the time to do all of these things besides your practice and your family?

Kay: I just--during the whole time, my practice never suffered. If I had to turn a patient over to another physician, I did. Otherwise, I worked all of it, figured it out.

LaBerge: Because it involved a lot of traveling, too. Did your wife usually go with you?

Kay: She only went to the annual meetings. She didn't go to the other meetings. There was an organization called the Public Health

League of California, which was a big organization and it went out of existence except for the Board of Eight. I was on that, '71, quit it about three years ago. We had money, we turned it over to the University of California Medical School. That was for lobbying purposes in the state capital. Which was an interesting sidelight.

LaBerge: Was that the only group that you belonged to that did lobbying?

Kay: Well, that and the ACCLU [American College of Clinical Urologists]. That was national, urology, and this was state medicine.

Testifying Before the Congressional Committee, 1974

LaBerge: So why don't we talk about some of the lobbying, including--we could start with the fact that you presented a speech to the Congress.

Kay: We could do that if you want to, but that was when I was president of the ACCLU. We got interested in a couple of cases where longtime costs to people with serious illnesses, congenital illnesses, would cost money and people were running out of money. We took that on to see if we could get some help for them, and that's what I lobbied for.

LaBerge: Some federal monies for?

Kay: Yes. So it's--actually used the word "universal health insurance," which I wonder about now, but anyway, help these people that had insurances that ran out. They were going to have to be taken care of forever. Very difficult.

LaBerge: So I just want to say for the tape that I'm holding in my hand a speech that Dr. Kay gave on May 23, 1974, before the Committee on Ways and Means, United States House of Representatives. And it says, "Regarding national health insurance."

Kay: Is that of interest?

LaBerge: Really interesting. Why don't you tell me a little bit about that experience of appearing before the Ways and Means Committee?

Kay: Well, it was interesting in that we had to get them to print up the speech the day before, and I was helped with that by the

secretary of the association. And then we presented it to them twenty-four hours before you appear. And then--

LaBerge: Then did they have it printed up after you presented--?

Kay: And then my wife was with me at that time. We went to the House to the meeting room. I was about the fourth person to appear. Started talking about eleven-thirty. As I finished, they didn't ask questions, because it was lunch time. That was the end of it. [laughter]

LaBerge: Were you relieved?

Kay: Yes. But I was all ready to answer questions. I had a past president with me, all ready, too. You sit at a table, just as you see on television. They sit up ahead of you. You read to them. That was it. Lunch came along, and they left.

LaBerge: Who were some of the representatives?

Kay: I'm trying to think. The main guy--I'm trying to bring back his name. The chairman of the Ways and Means Committee then--I think he became an alcoholic. Got in trouble with alcohol after being the head of it for some twenty years.

LaBerge: Was it one of those Southern representatives?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: Possibly Wilbur Mills?

Kay: Representative, yes. And I can't think of the other people. Nobody outstanding.

LaBerge: Besides the fact they didn't question you; otherwise, you might have remembered them.

Kay: I would have remembered them. I just gave my speech, and then they adjourned for lunch and didn't ask me to come back.

LaBerge: Who else gave a speech that day?

Kay: I don't know who the others were, but I was the only one from urology.

LaBerge: But the other people were also physicians?

Kay: The other people presenting speeches? No. The others had other problems that they were presenting to them.

LaBerge: So it didn't have anything to do with health insurance.

Kay: No. I was the only one doing it, because they handled health insurance, Ways and Means Committee.

LaBerge: So what came of this? Nothing?

Kay: Absolutely nothing. Not even a thank you.

Thoughts on Health Insurance

LaBerge: Since we're talking about that, tell me your thoughts on health insurance today, and what is happening.

Kay: Well, health insurance today, same thing--universal health, but I don't think government should be involved in it the way they're going to be. I think the quality of medicine is going to go down, and we're going to have a lot less doctors in medical care and cases where it will be very poor. If [President William] Clinton has all of his ideas.

An example--this is just one case that would come out of the recommendations, cystoscopy, which is one examination we do. We've been doing it originally in our office, and they decided it was too expensive, so then they went to a hospital, and then they went to these surgical centers. Came out yesterday, surgical centers can no longer do their cystoscopies, either in your office or the hospital. Which is about double the cost of what the surgical centers charge. These sort of things aggravate you in a way.

And then even the regulations and bureaucracies which are going to be established to run this thing, it's going to cost so much money. I think it's absolutely wrong. I think we have to look--if they want to see how wrong it is, look at the Canadian system, which is broke, and the English system, which is broke. When you think you'd have to wait six months for a surgical procedure which today you can get the next day or two, that is not good on the mentality or on the health, and as a result, many cases may be lost, malignancies developing, waiting six months for treatment is not good. Pardon me.

LaBerge: No, I want to hear exactly what you have to say. What would your suggestion be?

Kay: My suggestion would be less government control. I think the insurance companies, if they wanted to, could cover everybody without any difficulty. Having been on the board of Blue Cross and knowing at that time what they were making, they could have covered a lot more conditions. I think it's greed of money for people--for insurance companies. I shouldn't say greed, but--.

LaBerge: When you were running your practice, when you first started, was there health insurance at all?

Kay: Well, there was insurance, but nothing like it is today. We didn't have--people paid their bills. We had to collect bills from people, very little to do with insurance. If you had insurance it was Social Security--Medicare and Medicaid. I had to hire a special person just to take care of that. That's where the cost in medicine has gone, part of it. The paperwork is tremendous. The hospitals are not being regulated right. The hospitals are top-heavy with executives, and I feel that they should be controlled better than they are. When you think an aspirin costs five dollars.

LaBerge: You mean when you're a hospital patient and you get an aspirin--right.

Kay: For a while, and this is some of the doings of the different organizations I've belonged to, we requested and got that, when a patient went to the hospital, they were given a bill right then, that showed everything that was done. Today, they refuse to give you that bill.

LaBerge: Why?

Kay: Well, they say it isn't ready to give it to you. So you never see what's actually spent.

LaBerge: So you never even get it in the mail?

Kay: We used to get a copy of everything and you could check on it. I remember one time I ordered one thing and they charged the patient for ten of them. You go back and tell them, show them where they were wrong. This doesn't occur today. And that's one of the problems of medicine, as far as I'm concerned.

In the offices, every effort is made to get as much out of the insurance companies and Social Security and all those things, and Medicare, to make up for these differences, regulations.

LaBerge: When you were on the staffs of different hospitals, was there anything--did you have a say in any of that, how--?

Kay: Well, we did have a say. We had a say about giving the patients or not giving them medications, but we tried a lot of things. But the administrators were pretty strong. I'm trying to think-- the Hill-Burton Act came out. It's an old act. They were giving money to hospitals for enlargement and things like that. I had an idea, and I went to all the three hospital boards and presented it, that they buy an area up on the hill [Pill Hill in Oakland] and set up a central laboratory, central x-ray, central emergency. Each hospital board turned it down, because it would take away from them. But it would have saved a lot of money. I found out afterwards--I was furious about that--they don't want to save money.

LaBerge: Was this the three hospitals that are on the hill?

Kay: Yes. That was central everything, just one. Hill-Burton would have built it. I went to those three boards and presented it. They didn't want to lose their own identity, because it would mean that they wouldn't have these departments, which they could make so much money off of. And their own pharmacy--they wanted pharmacies. In other words, it would be a central building to those three hospitals. Now all three hospitals are together.

LaBerge: Now it's happening by--

Kay: I guess--

LaBerge: Because they couldn't survive alone, I guess. Is that right?

Kay: That's right. Peralta went out, Providence--Providence could have, because they have a strong backing. They saw the competitors joining, and they joined. And now it's confusion on the hill [now called Summit Medical Center].

LaBerge: Have you gotten involved at all in Summit Medical Center, how that's come about or not?

Kay: I was already out of practice.

LaBerge: Any other incidents like that, where you had an idea, where you saw something that could be done, and--?

Kay: No, I guess that was the best one to give as an example. Where are we now?

LaBerge: We're just sort of in these professional associations, and we haven't talked about the Blue Cross board yet, which isn't really a professional, so--. And we've mentioned every one here so far, all having to do with medicine.

Kay: All right.

LaBerge: But you might have something else to say, like about being president of any of these boards, or any more lobbying type things.

Kay: No, I have nothing. They were interesting; we traveled all over the country for them. Hawaii. Conventions in Hawaii, conventions in New York, conventions in Florida, conventions in Chicago, New Orleans, St. Louis.

LaBerge: And Mrs. Kay went along with you? Would you make a trip out of that?

Kay: We made a trip out of it. Usually, we would take a few days afterwards. I would pay the organizations and the hotels so I took her along.

V SIDELIGHTS TO MEDICAL PRACTICE AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Blue Cross Board

LaBerge: How about, why don't you tell me about being on the Blue Cross board, and how you were invited--

Kay: Well, I was invited on to it by a colleague who was interested in it. We used to meet every month. It was a very interesting thing. There were five doctors and ten businessmen, I was three years on the board. Blue Cross was established by the insurance company, nonprofit insurance company. Originally, it was established just for hospitals. Toward the end, it became involved with doctors. It was started in 1936 here in Oakland by a doctor who built up quite an organization. Today they're broke.

We had several--we had to keep a reserve in case there were any catastrophes. But in addition to that, they only had a 7 to 9 percent overhead. As a result, they were able to save a lot of money, had a lot of property. That was good reserve. The president then, after I quit, the president decided that the executive director was removed, or the CEO. They have a new man who has different ideas. They've lost a lot of property. We had the building downtown, but they moved to the headquarters to Los Angeles.

LaBerge: Building downtown Oakland or San Francisco?

Kay: Oakland. It was all here in Oakland.

LaBerge: So this was the national headquarters, then?

Kay: Yes. Well, Blue Cross of California. There's Blue Cross of every state, and a national headquarters that's back East someplace. Every state has a Blue Cross, but it started here in California. Okay?

LaBerge: Okay. And what was the relationship between Blue Cross and Blue Shield?

Kay: Now, Blue Shield was an outgrowth of the California Medical Association. They were primarily for doctors, and then they went to hospitals. They were originally sort of an arm of the California Medical Association. I got into trouble, because I didn't spend much time on them. When I was chairman of the council, I didn't look up to them. So I never got along with them. I didn't feel that they were doing things quite right. So I never got along with Blue Shield. Actually, I was on the board of Blue Cross. In many states, Blue Cross and Blue Shield are together.

LaBerge: That's what I thought.

Kay: But in California, they're separate. They wanted to make it together, and they came to us. I remember making a speech, and I said, "You know, you're like a rowboat coming to a big ship, trying to equal and be a big ship. We're the bigger one. We don't have to think about it all." So when I said it, I got a phone call the next day, "Please come over to Blue Shield as our guest, we want you to see everything." I got the royal treatment, showed me everything.

LaBerge: But they're still separate, is that correct?

Kay: Yes. Separate in California. Nationally, they're together.

LaBerge: Because I remember growing up, hearing them together--Blue Cross/Blue Shield, like it was one thing.

Kay: Yes. But that wasn't in California. See, originally there were Blue Shield physicians who were not a part of the hospital insurance.

LaBerge: What didn't you like that they were doing?

Kay: Oh, they were doing a lot of funny things. For example, they were giving out lists of doctors who weren't their members, making statements. They were cutting down on a lot of things that they should not have done. They started cutting down on payments.

LaBerge: For certain procedures?

Kay: Yes. Had to wait a long time to get money from them. Then they started categorizing procedures, telling you what you could charge.

LaBerge: So I take it you must have had patients who did have Blue Shield?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: What was the issue or the issues when you were a member of the Blue Cross board, or weren't there any major issues? It just happened that it kind of fell apart later?

Kay: Fell apart after changing management. We had to have a reserve to make investments. And we did. Issues of how much fees should be, how much we had to pay out. For example, January and February and March were outgoing more than we ever got in. Those are sick months. The rest of the year wasn't too bad.

Alameda County Institutions Commission##

LaBerge: We're going to talk about the Alameda County Institutions Commission.

Kay: The Alameda County Institutions Commission was a commission appointed by the county board of supervisors, and the primary thing was running health establishments under Alameda County. For example, all the clinics, Highland Hospital, Fairmount Hospital. It consisted of eleven members in the community. I think it was five doctors and members of the community. We would meet at least once a month. We ran the hospitals. Then we had a member of the board of supervisors on there with us, and we controlled the clinics and everything.

LaBerge: Are there clinics outside of those hospitals?

Kay: Yes, there are clinics throughout Alameda County. Free clinics.

LaBerge: Oh, like the Berkeley Free Clinic?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: I didn't realize there was anything, for instance, besides the Berkeley Free Clinic.

Kay: There's one in Oakland, in east Oakland, one in San Leandro. And it was a great group, we had a lot of problems there. One of the greatest problems was collecting money from people who used the hospital and were billed and never paid. We would find that there was about \$1 million a month that wasn't collected. We

recommended that they put the collection, they have a cashier and have people pay as they left, but the board didn't approve it. See, we were--we made suggestions and recommendations, and they had to be passed by the board of supervisors. That was quite a deal.

And then I guess I was on that for around eleven years. Then the board of supervisors decided to do away with the commission, they would be the ones who ran everything.

LaBerge: And it went downhill?

Kay: [motioning downhill]

LaBerge: Because the county was picking up the tab for all that?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: How were you appointed to the board?

Kay: By a county supervisor. It was appointed by county supervisors.

LaBerge: For instance, would he have chosen you because you were active in the medical association?

Kay: Yes. My associations with others, and also I knew him.

LaBerge: What was his name?

Kay: From Alameda. He was on the board for a long time. I can see him, but I can't get the name to you.

LaBerge: Did you serve with any other interesting people?

Kay: They were all interesting. I can't remember their names; there were a couple of doctors, but I can't remember their names. But the other people, one was Ben Aiken.

LaBerge: I've heard that name.

Kay: He was on the board. Paul Sampson was a doctor who was on that. I can see him, but I can't think of the name of this guy.

LaBerge: That's fine.

Kay: Bates.

LaBerge: Tom Bates?

Kay: Tom Bates was on it. He never came; he sent his assistant. He came to a couple of meetings, but he sent his assistant the rest of the times. With long hair.

Alameda County Mental Health Commission

LaBerge: What about the Alameda County Mental Health Commission?

Kay: That was just a sideline. That was about every three months, one meeting. I was on there for about two years. That came as a result of my being on the board of Alameda County Institutions Commission.

LaBerge: What kind of things did you do on that?

Kay: They discussed--a lot of discussion about mental health, about change in practice, needing more hospital beds. The county did not come through and the governor changed his mind.

LaBerge: Meaning Governor [Ronald] Reagan?

Kay: Yes. That was his idea. How to take care of them. Making arrangements for them through the county funds.

LaBerge: Did you encounter in your practice, people who needed mental help?

Kay: No. Never in my practice. I was just on this committee. I was on it a couple of years. I'm trying to think of the name of the person on the board there, who was mayor of Hayward. And now there's another member who is on the board of supervisors now, which is very interesting. She served. There were about three men and about five women. All right? That was a minor thing.

Emergency Medical Services for Alameda and Contra Costa Counties

LaBerge: Okay, that was a minor thing. What about, then, the Emergency Medical Services for Alameda and Contra Costa Counties?

Kay: Well, that's why I got this whole thing together [resume]. Is there a date on it?

LaBerge: No, but you said it was after the date of this resume, which was 1982. So after 1982, I'm guessing?

Kay: Earlier than that. It was about '79. It was a joint powers commission formed by Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, federally financed every year to work out a two-county emergency service, emergency medical service. I was the medical director for it.

LaBerge: Was this after you retired?

Kay: Yes. And we first met, the first year we were with Alameda County out at Fairmount [Hospital], had an office. I had one assistant, one nurse who was my assistant. And then we got bigger. We got a new director--the fellow that was directing was part-time directing Alameda County. A guy came in from Pennsylvania, and he was there two years, and we ran out of money. But we established principles and fundamentals for the emergency medicine for the two counties. And they have followed them ever since.

That was my first real experience with the federal bureaucracy. How to write reports to get money, whether you need it or not.

LaBerge: You mean if you write it correctly and you don't need it, you can still get it?

Kay: Yes. The guy that was the head of this thing was very efficient at that.

LaBerge: What was his name?

Kay: I forget. I took him out of my mind, I was so mad at him. At the very end, I pushed--.

[tape interruption]

Kay: Had to do with disbandment of this organization because of this fellow, I'll think of his name. Because he would ask me something, and I would disagree with him, and he would go over my head and do it anyway. He would put in a request, "Approved by the Alameda-Contra Costa County Medical Association." Had to get an endorsement from them. He wrote up the paper to get the money, and put in that he had had approval, but I knew he hadn't.

He irritated me, so I went out to the county one night and I told them not to approve it. They didn't get the approval from the medical association and didn't get any more money. He worked out--had an office, had an elaborate office in the Kaiser .

building down there--the MacArthur/Broadway building. He had a very nice suite of offices there, everything was paid for. He had [counting] five people working in there. He hired his girlfriend as a secretary, which was not right, because he was supposed to open it up for everybody. I called attention to it after a year, so they opened it up.

But this was the sort of thing that bothered me. His American Express card was paid for out of this, and he took vacations and had the thing paid for. He's now down in Ventura County, I'm trying to think of his name. That's my Emergency Medical Service. I'm still on the Emergency Medical Committee for the county. They call it an overall committee, and it's sort of the committee to approve everything. I'm still on that; I don't know how much longer I'll be on it.

LaBerge: How often do you meet?

Kay: Every three months. I've missed the last two meetings.

LaBerge: For instance, do you send out these principles to each hospital in the area, like to Alta Bates, for instance, and make them abide by it?

Kay: They have to abide by it. And to the ambulances, and to the fire department. All this, they're controlled by certain rules that are established. Recently, one's gone out: do not resuscitate a patient if the family does not approve. And then the training of the paramedics, went through all emergency principles. Made several trips on that. One to Kansas City, one to Minneapolis, one to Seattle, to study their systems. If you ever want a heart attack, have it in Seattle.

LaBerge: Oh, okay. [laughs] That's good to know.

Kay: One of the best treatment centers for heart attacks. Outstanding emergency services and care.

LaBerge: In your practice, did you have a lot of emergencies, or not? I would think not.

Kay: Not too many. Occasionally, somebody would start bleeding. That was an emergency. Or post-operative bleeding. But not too many.

LaBerge: So you didn't get a lot of calls at night or--? [Nods "no."] You didn't.

Kay: In the last few years, the nurses have changed and we had a lot of foreign nurses. So I used to have to stop in the hospitals

and check how they were doing. You talk to them, and they say, "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes." And you don't know if they understand. After a couple of experiences of trying, made a rule that I would stop in the hospital before I came home, because there were chances that they were not following instructions.

LaBerge: And this is at every hospital where you had patients? That's a lot of traveling around.

Kay: Just to check to see if they were all right. I used to call in, and I'd get these yeses. The next morning, I'd find the yeses should have been no. Funny that way.

LaBerge: That's very commendable. I'd like to be one of your patients.

Kay: No, you wouldn't. Not now.

Retirement Decision

LaBerge: Why did you decide to retire when you did? Because were you still in good health, it sounds like?

Kay: No. I was in good health, but I had a hip replacement in 1976. They promised me that I'd be out and back to practice in two months, and at the end of nine months, I was still not well. So I decided with a solo practice, going back after being out nine months was not worth it. So I quit. I had a man in the office who took my practice; I sold it. He's still in it, and is doing pretty well.

LaBerge: What's his name?

Kay: His name is Robert Safran. That was seventeen years ago.

LaBerge: Wow. Well, you have kept so busy, though, with all of these different boards, it looks like.

Alameda County Blood Bank and Related Issues

Kay: Yes. And then I went into--I guess I was eleven years at the blood bank.

LaBerge: I'd like to hear about that. How are we doing timewise? Would you like to stop and pick up later?

Kay: I don't care, I'm not going anyplace.

LaBerge: Okay. And you're not too tired?

Kay: No.

LaBerge: Okay.

Kay: During the blood bank, that's several years ago.

LaBerge: I've got 1982 to 1993 for the Blood Bank.

Kay: January 1 of '93. They fired us. It seems--

LaBerge: They fired you from your volunteer position?

Kay: No.

LaBerge: No, it wasn't volunteer?

Kay: You had to ask that question!

LaBerge: I'm sorry! [laughs]

Kay: There were five of us retired doctors, and we used to go out on what they call the mobiles.

LaBerge: Those big buses or whatever?

Kay: Well, not the big bus; they're separate. Go out to the different schools, different agencies, different places that have drives, and we would be there because it was required that a doctor be present. That was very interesting, because I went to many schools throughout the county.

LaBerge: High schools?

Kay: High schools and colleges. We went to the university at least maybe twice a semester. Mt. Diablo [Diablo Valley College], the state college. That is a beautiful college. Ohlone down at Mission San Jose. And then all the different high schools. And it was interesting, because you got to see people, got to know people.

Then we started, I guess about four years ago--I was out for a while, and when I came back, I couldn't go on the mobiles. I was in the center. They always had a doctor in the center all

day long. That was interesting, because you got to see people, got to know people.

LaBerge: Would you be called to talk--

Kay: Talk to people when there were problems, talk to them when the nurses found problems, when there were questions of whether they were eligible or not, we were the ones who made the decision.

LaBerge: I know a couple of times that I went and my blood count was down, I couldn't give. They always asked me, did I want to see a physician.

Kay: Ask to talk about why it was down. We used to talk to people. Then in October '92, they changed directors. The new director came in, and she wants to run the whole thing. She's there alone; did away with all the doctors.

LaBerge: Is she a doctor?

Kay: Yes, from San Francisco. So she's running it alone.

LaBerge: And she's the only doctor? And no doctor goes out on the mobile units? And that's not a regulation?

Kay: I thought it was, but it isn't now. The mobiles don't go out as much as they did. I don't know why. See, they set up centers, more centers, satellite centers all over.

LaBerge: I didn't realize that.

Kay: There's one down in Union City, there's one over in Pleasant Hill, and where is the other one? Martinez, I think.

LaBerge: Who is the new director? You don't want to mention it? Who is the old director?

Kay: Sylvia Hoag is the old one.

LaBerge: How did you get involved in that in the first place?

Kay: Well, I had nothing to do, and I asked the executive director-- not Sylvia, but it was run by the county. And of course, having been president, asked how about a job?. So they gave it to me. There were several before all this that had done this job. Six or eight doctors I have worked with have died.

LaBerge: It sounds like a great job for someone who's retired.

Kay: It was excellent. Kept us on our toes, because we had to keep up on everything. And we went through the AIDS thing. Unfortunately, at the beginning of the AIDS it came out that people got AIDS by donating blood. Now, somebody made that up. We had a couple of cases that occurred in '83 and '84 when people sued, because then we had AIDS but we did not have the tests then. Today, the blood that you get from the blood banks is about 99 and 99/100 percent pure. A lot of people want to see if they can give their own blood, so they come in and give blood for two or three weeks until they have enough. I get blood transfusions every three weeks, and I have no questions. Because I know all blood is tested.

LaBerge: I know when I've given blood, you get a little questionnaire that's--

Kay: Asks all the questions.

LaBerge: You can say yes or no, in case you didn't want anyone to know you maybe had AIDS.

Kay: That's right, afterwards, yes.

LaBerge: But do they still--?

Kay: They still do that.

LaBerge: Then do they still test that blood?

Kay: Yes--

LaBerge: Even if you said, "Yes, I'm fine"?

Kay: Yes. They test it all the way through. Every bit of blood is tested.

LaBerge: So when did the blood bank start doing these tests routinely?

Kay: Routinely, '85. And then they've increased the tests as they came out. You're tested for everything.

LaBerge: Because you worked there, were you involved in any of the controversy, or was there another board that dealt with all of that?

Kay: There's a board, the blood bank board. We were just working. We were employees.

LaBerge: I'm even more interested because somebody we think we're going to interview is Bernice Hemphill.

Kay: Hemphill, from San Francisco.

LaBerge: Yes.

Kay: Irwin Memorial Blood Bank which is different from us. They had problems; they had real problems.

LaBerge: Did you have anything to do with other blood banks?

Kay: Well, we are a member of the American Association of Blood Banks. I won't give you the name. Because you'll go tell her.

LaBerge: No, I won't tell her. But I might have more questions to ask her. [laughs]

Kay: The one thing that got me was before she came, she put in a fish tank in her office, a tremendous fish tank, which--she loves fish, exotic fish. That, to me, was a tip-off. If you have to have a fish tank before you come to work--.

LaBerge: Just off the cuff, what kind of problems did Irwin Blood Bank have that you didn't have?

Kay: Well, the AIDS deal. They had a lot more people who had AIDS who tried to give blood, and try to get by with it. That was their problem. Here the doctors made the decisions. Now, the nurses are making the decisions. And that's what they were doing in San Francisco all the time.

LaBerge: I see. So you don't think--there isn't some regulation from the American Association of Blood Banks?

Kay: I don't think so. I don't know. I thought there was, but apparently it's been dropped.

LaBerge: What's the difference between these blood banks, for instance, and the Red Cross?

Kay: Separate units. Pardon me--the Red Cross at times hasn't had the same standards as the American Association. I don't know if you know too much about the problem, but now they're getting into line. They're better. We had no American Red Cross in this county, San Francisco, Contra Costa County. They had it in San Jose and Santa Clara Counties. We interchange, but not as freely as we interchange with the American Association of Blood Banks.

LaBerge: Meaning that you have credit at one blood bank and go to another one?

Kay: We don't have interchange with American Red Cross.

LaBerge: You mean you don't interchange with the American Red Cross?

Kay: No.

LaBerge: Apparently, what I know about Mrs. Hemphill is that she was instrumental years ago in getting that--

Kay: She had it in San Francisco. She was a nurse, and she was the first one to get this started. She--they mention her name as sort of the flag of American Association of Blood Banks. Is she from Cal?

LaBerge: You know, I don't know. We aren't doing her because of any Cal connection. I don't think that she is.

You know, you've had such a wide variety in your career, not just limited to your specialty. It must make it interesting.

Kay: It was very interesting, all those things I did outside of it. I gave up being active in urology because of my son. We had a doctor who used to come to all these meetings, and when he got older he just sat and did nothing. He was ninety-some years old when he died. But he came up to the last minute to the meetings. My son said, "Don't you be a so-and-so," the name of the doctor, "and go to these meetings."

LaBerge: Had your son been to these meetings, so he knew this?

Kay: Yes, he noticed that. He knew this older doctor as my son had presented a paper and was given first prize for an outstanding paper, given by people who were out in practice.

LaBerge: What was the paper on?

Kay: I don't remember.

LaBerge: But this is your son who is the doctor?

Kay: Yes. It was a medical paper.

Sugar Cubes for Polio Prevention

LaBerge: Are you in a mood to talk about the polio epidemic and your involvement with the sugar cubes?

Kay: Sure. That's when I was president of the association. We got together with San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara, and we picked out a Sunday that we were going to present for twenty-five cents, or if you couldn't afford it, free, cubes of sugar with the polio, and then we had Polio Sunday.

LaBerge: Do you know what year this was? I'll just look it up.

Kay: I think it was '63, '62 or '63. I remember going to all the centers, as many as I could make, but they made sure everything was going all right. Very successful. We did about 90 percent of the people.

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LaBerge: So you went to almost all the centers, adults and children.

Kay: On that Sunday, yes. To see if everything was in place and was working right. It was very successful. There were a lot of volunteers who acted at the centers. We gave people a sugar cube with the vaccine in it and they ate it and that was it.

As you know, it's kept polio out of circulation.

LaBerge: It sure has. And I know later, when my children were babies, anyway, there was some kind of liquid that they would squirt in their mouths.

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: But even before that, I remember as a child at school lining up to go get shots. Were you involved in that before--?

Kay: No. The only thing I was involved in was as an intern thing. They had four or five kids on respirators.

LaBerge: Is that what gave you the inspiration to do this?

Kay: No. Just got the other one when they got the vaccine, it was so cheap we decided it would be well to, as a public health thing, just kind of to do that. And the medical association was the leader in it. That's what medical associations should be.



Dr. Harold Kay (middle) prepares to eat a sugar cube as part of the "Knock out Polio" program, 1964. In the background is a map of Contra Costa and Alameda Counties.

LaBerge: As opposed to being just political?

Kay: Right.

LaBerge: When you were involved in all of these professional associations, were there any other big things like polio that you needed to take a stand on, or--?

Kay: No, not really. Well, the biggest, as I said, was Medicare. When we had several special meetings of the House of Delegates of the AMA. I still remember the AMA answered it very emphatically, yes. A spokesman rented the big hall, he sat in the middle of it, and there was nobody else there. He gave a speech against Medicare. It's still in my mind that he gave that, very impressive.

The thing that used to bother me is when a patient would come, the family would bring him, drove a chauffeured car, and he'd come in and present Medicaid and Medi-Cal for the bill. At that time, they weren't too anxious to pay their bills. I felt that those who can afford it were using it all up, and those who can't afford medical care aren't getting it.

LaBerge: Now I'm thinking, do you want to talk about what you've done with the city of Piedmont? From what I'm looking at, the things we have left to do are your community involvement in Piedmont, and maybe Masonic and Shrine, Rotary Club, Temple Sinai.

Kay: Okay.

LaBerge: Unless there's something I'm missing. Or we can do it another time.

Kay: We can do it another time.

LaBerge: Okay, why don't we do that.

California Academy of Medicine

[Interview 4: February 17, 1994]###

Kay: All right. I forgot to tell you about the California Academy of Medicine, which is made up of all branches of medicine. It meets once a year in San Francisco on a Saturday night, and it's formal. You have to be elected into it. I joined it in 1947.

LaBerge: How do you get elected into it?

Kay: People put your name up, and then they vote on you. They send out a ballot with the names of the people to go into. There are quite a few people from the East Bay, San Francisco, and throughout the northern part of California.

LaBerge: For instance, what would be a reason someone wouldn't vote for a person?

Kay: A local reputation. They have speakers on medicine from throughout the country.

A very interesting thing that I think might be of interest to you, not necessarily in the book, but for years and years, they always had a cocktail hour, dinner, and then the speaker. And after a couple of meetings where people fell asleep and started snoring during the meeting, they changed the format: the speaker first, then the drinks, then the dinner. And at most clubs today, most meetings, you'll notice that many times the speaker speaks first before dinner.

LaBerge: I think that's a good idea. Were your wives included in these meetings?

Kay: Wives were not included.

LaBerge: I see. How did that go over?

Kay: It was very upsetting to them, because we'd get dressed formally without them, and on a Saturday night. It was only once a year, thank goodness.

LaBerge: Is that still going on?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: Any memorable speakers you heard?

Kay: I can't remember any.

LaBerge: But the idea was it kind of kept you abreast of everything in medicine?

Kay: Of general medicine.

LaBerge: Do you remember who nominated you to belong?

Kay: Dr. Meads.

A Thank You from Kaiser Doctors

LaBerge: In your scrapbook, there were several nice letters from him to you congratulating you on being president or--

Kay: Yes. Did you come across the letter from the--[pause] A letter I got from the HMO [Health Maintenance Organization] in Oakland.

LaBerge: Yes, I did, thanking you for helping them out, from Kaiser.

Kay: Kaiser.

LaBerge: Yes, it was very nice. There was some problem with something in Hayward, was that--?

Kay: Well, it was in all the hospitals, they wouldn't let them join the association. They had trouble with the community, when they first started.

LaBerge: So you were instrumental in getting the Kaiser doctors into the medical association?

Kay: Yes.

The 100 Club

LaBerge: That was a very nice letter. So anything more on the California Academy of Medicine?

Kay: No, that's all. And the 100 Club, there's a local club made up of 100 members. Again, you had to be voted in or recommended by someone.

LaBerge: Just doctors, or--

Kay: Everybody in the community. I don't know whether it's still going on or not; I dropped out about eighteen years ago. You would give \$100, and you'd have one meeting a year, and half the money went to the local boys and girls clubs. It was a charitable--although they did have a wonderful dinner.

LaBerge: Was that for couples, the dinner?

Kay: It was not.

LaBerge: That was just for the men, too?

Kay: I like men.

LaBerge: I see. I understand you do! [laughter] Was this kind of a rotary-type thing, or--?

Kay: No.

LaBerge: I guess I'm trying--is the community the East Bay?

Kay: Yes, it was just the East Bay. A local thing. I don't know whether it's still going or not.

LaBerge: So who nominated you for that one?

Kay: A Dr. Tucker from Peralta Hospital.

Piedmont Boy Scout Council

LaBerge: You were involved in other boys and girls things, like I noticed you were on the Boy Scout Council.

Kay: From Piedmont, for twenty-five years.

LaBerge: What did you have to do for that?

Kay: I used to meet, when they had meetings, I was the doctor representative on it. And of course, when my boys were growing up, I went to camp with them, overnights, and was active with them. Both boys were in scouting; my older boy was an Eagle Scout. My younger boy went up to Star Scout, I guess it was, and all of his friends had dropped out, so he dropped out, unfortunately.

LaBerge: Well, you know earlier on the tape, you told the story about yourself and scouting.

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: Were you also a troop leader or something for your boys?

Kay: No, I wasn't.

LaBerge: But you were on the Piedmont Boy Scout Council. Well, you were on certainly longer than your boys were involved; you were on for twenty-five years.

Kay: Right.

Piedmont Emergency Preparedness Committee. Planning Commission.
and Schools

LaBerge: I know there were other community things; I don't know if they involved kids or not, but City of Piedmont Emergency Preparedness Committee?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: What did that involve?

Kay: Involved meeting until we got everything set up. I was setting up an emergency in case of any disaster, and I got four containers at four spots in Piedmont where they have emergency supplies. The three schools, and then the one at the playgrounds.

LaBerge: Where did you get the containers?

Kay: Donated, two of them from Blue Cross, and the other two, I forgot exactly who donated them.

LaBerge: Did that take about a year to set all that up, or longer?

Kay: No, not quite a year. And then I was on the--I taught emergency medical, I talked about that. Did I say about the planning commission?

LaBerge: No, you didn't.

Kay: I was on the planning commission for six years in the city of Piedmont, chairman the last two years.

LaBerge: What did that involve? Are there zoning or--

Kay: Involved a meeting once a month, hearings on planning in the city of Piedmont. In between times, we would examine the projects that were being proposed to us to see firsthand what they really were.

LaBerge: Building projects?

Kay: Right, building projects, additions and so forth. Anything that the planning commission does.

LaBerge: Is that an elected thing?

Kay: No, appointed. I was appointed by the mayor, who at the time was a doctor, Gil Cochrane. And a comment was made, "A doctor on the planning commission."

LaBerge: Well, how about a doctor for a mayor? [laughs]

Kay: That was right.

LaBerge: Well, if anyone had known you, they would have known that you'd been involved in a lot of community and volunteer things that you have more than just one little set of knowledge there.

Kay: Right. It was interesting. What was most interesting was, I guess, was the reaction of citizens to other people.

LaBerge: Can you give me an example?

Kay: Well, there was to be a redistribution of a lot, and we had a hearing one night and some thirty people came to object. The interesting thing was, they'd say, "We've been neighbors for years and we love you, we think that you're wonderful, but don't you dare make those changes." That, to me, was sort of the idea through all of it. People would come and object for just unusual things, such as losing their views, losing their identities, and didn't like the color of the walls on the outside, or didn't like the trees they were planting, and it was a variety of objections.

One of the sad things, which I don't think--I guess you don't need to know about it, but this one woman up in one area didn't want something built, and I went up and saw from her bedroom where this would be objectionable. We were going to lower it. I left the house, and in the next day I hear she committed suicide. That was the most pathetic thing for me, having been with her just the day before, and telling her that we--what we were doing for her. That stuck out in my mind as one example.

And while on the planning commission for the city of Piedmont, we used to have a gasoline station--we actually had two--and we closed one and put a bank and a market and so forth. And the fighting over the removal of the gasoline station to put a bank went on to such an extent that we had to have a public

hearing, which was most unusual to have, to hear from people. We finally decided to approve the removal of the gas station and putting in a bank, in the city of Piedmont, which was an interesting sidelight to the planning commission.

LaBerge: Oh, I bet. Was that the Bank of America, or Wells Fargo?

Kay: Wells--whatever Wells Fargo is now. [Wells Fargo]

LaBerge: Do you think that this city is more unusual than--

Kay: This city is most unusual. In most cities, it's locally and citizen-run, and you have your voice in everything that you want to have it in. We have a classmate in the class of '31 who attends every single city council meeting and objects to everything. Class of '31 at UC. Of course, the city people turn to me and say, "Your classmate was up today." I shouldn't tell you all these things.

LaBerge: No, you can cross this out when it comes out if you don't like it. Did Mrs. Kay get involved in anything in the city too, or you were her representative? I imagine she's been involved in other community things.

Kay: She was very involved at the beginning in the Oakland Museum, the White Elephant sale for that, and other community things. Primarily when the children were in school, she was involved in women's auxiliary of the medical association, the county medical. Otherwise, her prime thing was raising her children.

LaBerge: Well, let's see. What else? Anything more on the city of Piedmont?

Kay: It was on the wall, maybe you saw it--I was made honorary chief of the fire department.

LaBerge: Yes, I wondered what brought that on?

Kay: That was the establishment of the emergency services. I used to take care of them. Then I am a volunteer policeman for the city of Piedmont.

LaBerge: What does that mean?

Kay: I used to do a lot of office work, and home searches--when people are on vacations, we check their houses. Now I've been doing very little because of my health, but it meant doing that. We have about twenty-three, twenty-five senior volunteers, and they check out houses, they do a lot of extra work at the police

department, in the property room, which I did, too, for a while for the Piedmont department.

LaBerge: How many years have you lived in Piedmont?

Kay: We've lived in Piedmont since '45. We have lived in Berkeley; the war came along and we had to move, and then when we came back, we wanted to go to Berkeley. We couldn't find a place to live. We rented a house in Piedmont, and two years later, we bought our home, and then have lived in Piedmont since then.

LaBerge: Your children went to all Piedmont schools?

Kay: All the children went to all the Piedmont schools. My children went to California schools.

LaBerge: One to Berkeley, and one to UCLA, is that right?

Kay: That's where they graduated from, but they both went to [University of California at] Santa Barbara to begin with. Went to Santa Barbara, started--our idea with coming from a small community like Piedmont and going to a small college, like Santa Barbara was at that point, was a slow step in going to the two bigger schools.

LaBerge: That was a good idea.

Vacations, Rotary, Masonic Lodge, Temple Sinai

LaBerge: Well, while we're talking about your children, did you do family vacations or activities other than Boy Scouts?

Kay: Yes. For ten years, we went to Lair of the Bear every year. It had just started. Then our older boy by that time was too old to be with the family, so he went out to work in summertimes. Our younger one took a trip to Canada with us for three weeks. And then we also went to the East Coast, took a car trip for two weeks up and down the East Coast another summer, going to all the places you're supposed to go, such as Washington, Boston, New York.

LaBerge: Otherwise, did the family travel with you when you went to your various meetings, or just your wife?

Kay: Just my wife. Not all the time, but most of the time. Conventions particularly; not the average meeting.



The Kay Family, 1959: Harold, Frances, Steve, and Rob.

LaBerge: I know you went back to American Samoa at least once.

Kay: Once. We went back there, and saw a complete change. Couldn't believe how things had changed. Couldn't believe they opened two tuna fisheries on one side. The town itself had more industry than before. Things that I had seen built when I was there were all destroyed.

LaBerge: How about your hospital?

Kay: The hospital had been destroyed and they started a new one.

LaBerge: What about Rotary? I have that written down as something you were involved in.

Kay: I joined Rotary, Piedmont Rotary Club, I believe it was twenty-four years ago, twenty-five. I'm still a member of it. I became president in 1971, I believe, to '72 of the Piedmont Rotary. Rotary is known throughout the world. I don't have to discuss what they do.

LaBerge: Okay. And how about Masonic--?

Kay: Joined the Masonic Lodge, I don't remember exactly when. Became a Shriner. I dropped out of that years ago.

LaBerge: And then Temple Sinai, you've been somewhat involved there.

Kay: I was very involved in that, on the board of directors for twelve years. Didn't hold any offices. Still a member; been a member since 1917.

LaBerge: I'm just amazed at all the things you've done in your life, and how you had time--

Kay: To practice.

Motivation for Community Work

LaBerge: Well, to practice, and to do this, and to do a good job at all of it, and where the motivation came from.

Kay: I don't know. Well, I guess it was--I really don't know where it came from.

LaBerge: Because a lot of people would just sit back and say, "Oh, let George do it."

Kay: I didn't feel George could do it. What made me think of that, I don't know.

LaBerge: Or maybe you thought George wouldn't do it.

Kay: That could be it.

LaBerge: It must have started early in your life, because you said you were active when you were in college, for instance, and Rally Week and all those kinds of things, which is kind of a beginning.

Kay: Yes, it was. I guess really it started, I was active in scouting, as a scout. That could have started it. In Berkeley at that time, in scouting we did a lot of community things. I have a picture someplace showing the drive for Christmas food, I believe. We had those drives that many years ago. Serving with--what's his name?

LaBerge: Fred Stripp?

Kay: Fred Stripp. We were in the same troop.

LaBerge: It sounds also like your parents were very involved in the community, like your mother helping refugees and getting scholarships, and it must have--

Kay: Yes, they were. And my father was a businessman in Berkeley and was very active in the city of Berkeley. They asked him to be on the city council several times, but he refused that.

LaBerge: And I'm just interested, has it carried on with your sons? Are your sons involved in their--?

Kay: No, neither one. I know my son in San Francisco isn't, the lawyer, but the doctor in Cleveland I don't think is--his main concentration is on the Cleveland Clinic.

Berkeley Foundation Award and Cal Connections

LaBerge: I noticed in your scrapbook that you have won an award from the Berkeley Foundation, the trustee award for fundraising--it didn't say for fundraising, but I think that's--

Kay: That's what it was, yes. That was doing the time with the class, our fiftieth anniversary. That's where it started, our support of this deal that you're doing now.

LaBerge: How did you happen to take that on? Did someone ask you?

Kay: The president of the class asked me, who was Stern Altshuler at that time. He since has passed away.

LaBerge: Have you been involved in other things at Cal besides your class?

Kay: I think I told you, I was at the hospital out there--

LaBerge: Oh, that's right, at Cowell.

Kay: At Cowell for twenty-five years. Otherwise, I was not involved.

LaBerge: Did you drive yourself around to all these different hospitals when you had to go from one to the other?

Kay: Yes.

LaBerge: You didn't have a chauffeur?

Kay: [makes face]

LaBerge: [laughs] Some people do. I just--I didn't think that you did. Well, let's see. We talked about the time you went to Washington to testify, but then in your scrapbook I saw another note that in 1960, you were there to fight to keep the Oakland Veterans Hospital in Alameda County.

Kay: I wasn't there; that was done in Oakland here. They had sent a delegation from the navy, five officers, to come out to see about Oak Knoll being closed, and we had a meeting with them. That was the time when--I think I told you about--the corpsman that became a captain.

LaBerge: Yes.

Changes in Medicine and Urology

LaBerge: I'm coming down to the end of my list, but you may have some more things. What about changes in medicine, changes in urology, since you started to practice?

Kay: There have been marked advances in medicine and in urology, from simple little things where we did a lot of surgery, things today they treat by other means, such as breaking up stones in the kidneys by laser beams, by new medicines that we do not have to do as much surgery, and diagnosis is much easier than it used to be. It's interesting that in urology, you could make an accurate diagnosis in between 95 and 97 percent of your cases, without exploratory, which was a great help, and gave me the satisfaction of treating my patients.

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LaBerge: Okay, the change came--

Kay: Most of these changes have come after--in the last eighteen years after I've been out of practice, but I have followed them closely.

LaBerge: For instance, in your practice, did you treat adults and children?

Kay: Yes, I did both. I was head of urology at Children's Hospital for ten years. We used to treat adults and children. Today, that's broken into adults and mostly--and especially a pediatric bureau, which gradually developed over the last twenty years, which I think is a good idea.

LaBerge: There was also in your scrapbook a letter from a grateful patient. You must have gotten more than just one, about how-- both that you had the real art of medicine, besides the science, and that she was afraid of her operation except she had such confidence in you that--

Kay: I don't remember reading that.

LaBerge: I can't remember what her name is, but you'll have to look back at that. So how many days a week would you do surgery?

Kay: In my days of practice, we didn't have special days for surgery. When it came up, we just scheduled it. We usually scheduled it depending where the person lived, and of course, what convenient times we could get their surgery scheduled. Most hospitals, I'd get it in the morning; one or two hospitals you had to wait until the afternoons; I would prefer not to do surgery in the afternoons because I think unless it was an emergency, I didn't think it was right for the patients to have to wait that long, or that I'd like to have to cancel office hours to do surgery. I had office hours every day except Wednesday, the famous doctors' day off.

LaBerge: Right. But then you worked on Saturday, probably.

Kay: Saturday mornings. And then gradually gave that up. Today, I think doctors give up a lot of the time, but they're going to pay for it soon, when somebody controls them, more than they're being controlled now. And for the record, they are being controlled now.

LaBerge: Who are they being controlled by now?

Kay: By the government. I realized that I had to hire a special girl just for insurance forms and things to be sent to the government in my last few years to carry on practicing medicine. And that's one of the costs of practicing medicine that people lose sight of, that there's so many forms and so many regulations that you have to have a person trained in your office to be able to take care of it, or as a lot of people do, have outside agencies that do it, which costs money. That's lost sight of in this cost of medicine.

LaBerge: Would you say there are other changes in general medicine, too?

Kay: Yes, this is true throughout. I see that in the last few years solo practices are no longer in existence, because of the cost of doing business, and by business with the forms which I have just described. And you're going to see more and more groups of medicine.

At one time, you asked me how I could carry on all of my outside activities. I had several colleagues who I used to sign out to, and they carried on very well for me.

LaBerge: You mean, for instance. if you were going away--

Kay: Going away, I'd sign out to somebody. They'd take over, and vice versa; when they went away, I took their practice. Of course, telling our regular patients we were going to be out of town, so it was only in emergencies that that occurred. That was one of the pleasures of practicing in the East Bay: the doctors were all very friendly and very cooperative between ourselves. It wasn't a case of stealing patients or talking about the doctors. This community was a very good community to practice medicine in. Not like many others in the country, and some that are not very far away from here.

LaBerge: San Francisco, for instance?

Kay: Did I say that?

LaBerge: You didn't say that.

Kay: You said it. For once, you're right.

Life's Lessons

LaBerge: Just from your life experience, what are real life savers for you? What has kept you going? I can think of one I'd suggest, is your sense of humor. Do you think that's helped?

Kay: That helped a great deal. I took things serious when they were real serious, and took things lightly, and didn't make a lot out of things. I think that has a lot to do with success.

LaBerge: What else like that has been important?

Kay: To give of yourself to people, and to help people when they need help. That has been my philosophy. I guess that's the end of the interview.

LaBerge: Do you want to end it there?

Kay: No, no.

LaBerge: That made me think, the other picture in your scrapbook is a wonderful one of Yehudi Menuhin and his sister.

Kay: We were very close through the years, and we still are.

LaBerge: Anything else, though, that you want to say to sum it up, or about family life or anything like that?

Kay: No, I think that one of the things in family life you have to give and take between each other. We had one philosophy: we never went to bed after an argument without making up. That's good for you, you know.

LaBerge: That's very good for me.

Kay: And talk it all out.

LaBerge: Well, your marriage has certainly lasted--

Kay: A couple years.

LaBerge: A couple years. [laughs] Anything else that you want to add?

Kay: I think we've got enough.

LaBerge: Okay. We'll end there, and I'll just end by saying thank you very much for sharing more than just one interview.

Kay: Right.

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